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AN ANGLER'S RAMBLES  
AND ANGLING SONGS.

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# AN ANGLER'S RAMBLES

AND

## ANGLING SONGS

BY THOMAS TOD STODDART

AUTHOR OF 'THE ANGLER'S COMPANION TO THE RIVERS AND LOCHS OF SCOTLAND.'



EDINBURGH

EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS

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TO  
HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF ROXBURGHE,  
WHOSE SKILL AND EXPERIENCE AS A SALMON-FISHER  
ARE ONLY EXCELLED BY  
THE GENEROSITY HE HAS UNIFORMLY SHOWN TOWARDS THE  
LOVERS OF RIVER-SIDE SPORTS ;  
AND TO WHOM,  
FOR HIS EXERTIONS IN CONNEXION WITH THE TWEED ACTS NOW IN FORCE,  
BOTH THE ANGLING COMMUNITY AT LARGE,  
AND  
THE OWNERS OF SALMON-FISHINGS ON THE BORDER RIVERS,  
ARE GREATLY INDEBTED,  
THIS VOLUME  
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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## P R E F A C E.

MOST of the Songs and Poems embodied in this volume were printed in a collected form, along with other effusions, several years ago—published I can hardly call them; for although bearing on the title-page, by express sanction, the imprimatur of a celebrated Edinburgh firm, they laboured under the disadvantage of emanating from a provincial press, were sparingly advertised, and not urged to any great extent upon public attention. From the reviewer, however, in the limited sphere of ordeal to which they were submitted, they met with a flattering reception, which was enhanced, shortly after its issue, by the exhaustion of the impression. Of this success I neglected to avail myself, and it was only recently, encouraged by the solicitations of friends, that I entertained the idea of putting that portion of my rhythmical effusions together in a new shape, and blending them at haphazard with a few prose sketches on piscatorial subjects. In carrying this plan into execution, besides introducing original matter, I have subjected my former compositions to a careful revision, pruning them where I discovered redundancies, and investing them, where it seemed both

in keeping and of advantage, with some new thought or more approved form of expression.

So much for the poetical portion of the present volume. In regard to the Prose sketches, several of them appeared a few years ago in the pages of a weekly sporting paper published in London. My intention, when they were commenced, was simply to relate in a consecutive form some of my angling experiences. In doing this, I trusted for assistance to a diary or register kept by me since the spring of 1827, in which have been jotted down, punctually as they occurred, my successes with the rod and line, etc. The connexion, however, formed by me with the journal I have just referred to gave a different turn to the design, and will account to some extent for the rambling and diffusive character of this part of the work.

During a residence of nearly thirty years on Tweed-side, I have had ample opportunities for making myself acquainted with the habits of the migratory *Salmonidæ* belonging to our Border rivers. I feel therefore in a position to pronounce unhesitatingly upon several points relating to the natural history of the *salar*, *eriox*, and *albus*, during their sojourn in the fresh water, which are not generally subscribed to. Throughout the volume will be found scattered the views entertained by me upon some of these questions. I have introduced the expression of them, however, not in order to provoke discussion, but simply, and in a casual form, as matter of conviction resting with myself.

To the requirements of Tweed and its tributaries, under the treatment which they are at present receiving, I have also, in the concluding pages, called attention. Through the zealous exertions of his Grace the Duke of Roxburghe, our Border rivers have been set free from many glaring abuses, and are now under control of Acts of Parliament, which promise to work well for them in future ; but it is impossible not to see, as new exigencies present themselves, where further reforms are required, and may be set in motion. The suggestions made by me in this direction, I have the gratification of knowing are generally approved of by my angling friends on Tweedside.



## N O T E.

THE courtesy of the Angling Club established at the "Nest," in granting the use of their spirited engraving, 'The Water-Ousel,' by Simson, as an appropriate ornament to the title-page of these Poems and Sketches, is acknowledged by the Author, with many thanks.





AN ANGLER'S RAMBLES AMONG  
THE RIVERS AND LOCHS OF SCOTLAND.

## INTRODUCTORY.

IN the opening stanzas of this Poem, the Rambler, referring to his angling experiences on several of the more prominent rivers and lochs connected with our Highland districts, dwelleth very briefly upon their leading features ; and, at Stanza Fourth, is moved by the recollections of a tour through the wilds of Sutherlandshire, in the year of our Lord 1850, to descant upon some of the sporting waters belonging to that county.

AN ANGLER'S RAMBLES AMONG  
THE RIVERS AND LOCHS OF SCOTLAND.

---

I.

I'VE angled far and angled wide,  
On Fannich drear, by Luichart's side,  
Across dark Conon's current ;  
Have trod by Beauley's silver'd stream,  
Where flashing through the Forest Dream  
Hangs the eternal torrent.

II.

Among the rocks of blue Maree,  
O'er whose chafed billows, ever free,  
Impatient eagles hover ;  
And where, at Glomach's ruffian steep,  
The pent stream takes its daring leap  
Many a fathom over.

III.

By Lochy sad and Laggan lake ;  
Where Spey uncoils his glittering snake  
Among the hills of thunder ;  
Dropping at will the witching fly  
Where swarthy Findhorn hurries by  
The booming Forest under.

## IV.

Where, from his lair of clouds, Ben More  
Keeps sullen watch o'er sea and shore,—  
    A huge unbending terror !  
That in the pauses of the storm  
Scowling regards his rugged form  
    In Assynt's trembling mirror.

## V.

With the sad water-nymphs that weave  
His summer raiment, morn and eve,  
    I've join'd in plaintive chorus ;  
A hundred voices lent their wail,  
Moan'd the black tarn and sung the gale  
    In fitful gusts before us.

## VI.

Inver caught up the doleful chaunt,  
And from the kelpie's reedy haunt  
    Came shapes and sounds unchancy,—  
Fays, elves and bogles—sobs and chimes—  
Spell-word and charm and wizard rhymes  
    Woven in the loom of Fancy ;

## VII.

In the grim passes of the West,  
Where Kirkaig in his fierce unrest  
    Foams like a demon frantic,  
Tearing his way from Fewn's embrace  
Through moor and mist—a troubled race—  
    To wed the wild Atlantic !

## VIII.

Below the corries of the stag,  
In hollows deep o'erhung with crag,  
    In meres whose floating lilies  
Give shelter to the giant trout—  
A gleamy chain whose links stretch out  
    From Lairg to Edderachyllis,

## IX.

Chafing the base of bold Ben Stack,  
And onward through the salmon track  
    Of the famed Laxford twining ;  
Coy Laxford ! which the sea-nymphs love  
And lure into their laughing grove  
    With amorous inclining.

## X.

In Dionard's melancholy strath,  
Whilom the spell broke on Cape Wrath  
    Of demons in commotion,  
Scaring from its accustom'd haunt  
The dank and moody cormorant,  
    Weird watcher of the ocean !

## XI.

Far in the distance, as I sped  
Whither the wilful river led,  
    Willing and strong to follow,  
Loom'd the grand front of cloud and sea,  
And moans of conflict, stealthily,  
    Crept panting up the hollow.

## XII.

In shadow of those summits grey,  
 Where hunted the old lords of Reay,  
     Chasing the antlers royal  
 From sunny Erriboll across  
 With wild halloo through quiv'ring moss  
     To the broad base of Loyal.

## XIII.

In that green valley on whose breast  
 Sings Naver with a lover's zest,  
     All through the tide of summer,—  
 Filling the solitude with life,  
 And soothing the harsh ear of strife  
     With its bewitching glamour.

## XIV.

On Hallowdale, whose moorland blood  
 Grows pale, invaded by the flood  
     Which, when the south winds rally,  
 From huddled storms and sleeping snows—  
 The garner'd thrifts of winter—flows  
     Resistless down the valley.

## XV.

The angler  
 passeth to  
 Caithness  
 and pursueth  
 his calling

On Thurso, blended with whose name  
 Live feats of skill approaching fame  
     And to the angler dearer—  
 Talk'd over at the evening board,  
 The wand a rival to the sword,  
     Above the smoking cheerer—

## XVI.

Talk'd over when the heart is rife,  
 And the strong passion of one's life  
   Takes form in fireside story ;  
 In that rich hour when Fancy sooth  
 Throws her flower'd mantle over Truth,  
   And elevates to glory ;

## XVII.

On Thurso, with whose going forth  
 To face the rough seas of the North  
   Amid the March winds' bluster,  
 Is heard the war-cry from afar  
 Of the 'impetuous' Dunbar,  
   ' Ho ! anglers, to the muster !'

## XVIII.

Below the fairy Ess of Shin,  
 Where poised on its elastic fin  
   The salmon breasts the current ;  
 On Brora too, whose pulse throbs fast,  
 Timed by the moaning of the blast,  
   And music of the torrent.

He taketh a  
 cast of the  
 wand

## XIX.

On Deveron, where the Huntly's tower  
 Tells its own tale of feudal power  
   In grim, barbaric letters ;  
 Among the braes of Rothiemay,  
 And where the Bogie blinks the day  
   Under its flowery fetters.

The angler  
 visiteth the  
 rivers of  
 Aberdeen-  
 shire.

## XX.

In the broad valley of the Dee,  
 Whose wealth of fish and dearth of tree  
     Find comment in old annal ;  
 And in that strath, to anglers dear,  
 Where Don and Urie blend their cheer  
     In one harmonious channel.

## XXI.

He proceed-  
 eth to Forfar-  
 shire and  
 dippeth line

In those sweet Esks whose seaward course  
 Seems of persuasion more than force,  
     Yet thralls confess'd of ocean ;  
 Which in the spring-time render up  
 The overflowing of their cup  
     With emulous devotion.

## XXII.

He passeth  
 to the High-  
 lands of  
 Perthshire,

Where wed the Garry and the Tilt,  
 In the chosen stronghold of the kilt,  
     Rock-bound and deck'd with heather ;  
 In pools bridged o'er with leafy arch,  
 Birch, hazel, alder, oak, and larch,  
     I've cast the cunning feather.

## XXIII.

On Tummel too, whose life is all  
 One fair romance from lake to fall,  
     Soul-moving, eye-delighting ;  
 A story and a vision both  
 Which strangely, in our later growth,  
     Renews its power inviting.



## XXIV.

Wild 'Tummel ! nursed on Rannoch's lap,  
 Where many a legend of mishap  
     Lends to the terrors reigning,  
 And fed in thine expanded course  
 By savage Erocht roaring hoarse  
     What time the moon is waning !

## XXV.

To thee, confides Schihallion  
 The joys and sorrows of his throne,  
     The sun-gleam and the shadow ;  
 All the strong burthen of his breast  
 Is laid on thine, from steep and crest  
     Down to the enamell'd meadow.

## XXVI.

The mystery of beauty dwells  
 With thee, unrobing in thy dells,  
     And wantoning round thy fountains ;  
 Winter and summer—fall and spring  
 Works the sweet spell, within its ring  
     Of forests, lakes, and mountains.

## XXVII.

Oft shouldering my trusty wand,  
 I've traversed the stern Grampian land  
     Made famous by the Roman,  
 And conjured from grey mound and fosse  
 Fierce cohorts deluging the moss,  
     In shadow of the gloamin' !

The angler  
 crosseth the  
 Grampians.

## XXVIII.

Huge heights that argue deep descents !  
Dark dells and gorges hung with rents,  
And by contention serried—  
The *pylæ* of the winds which roam  
At autumn-tide, with steps of foam  
And wail of forms unburied !

## XXIX.

Toward this source of river life,  
The angler yearns with spirit-strife  
And sympathies untiring ;  
Its skies on him rain harmonies,  
And from the heath float melodies,  
At the soul's strong desiring.

## XXX.

Upon his inner ear the chime  
Of waters, like some cherish'd rhyme,  
Falls with a power entrancing ;  
And in its strain the tone recalls  
Of Love's delighting madrigals—  
His life and love enhancing.

## XXXI.

Resist for aye the tide of change,  
Ye Grampians ! Be the same stern range  
That hush'd our boyhood's prattle !  
Keep in this day your ancient place,  
And nourish still a fiery race  
To lead into the battle !

## XXXII.

No longer I essay to climb  
Your stormy heights, the hand of Time  
    So sorely on me presses ;  
But in the valleys now delight,  
And watch the shadows of their might  
    Dark'ning the green recesses.

## XXXIII.

The impulses which moved the boy  
Have pass'd away. A graver joy  
    Absorbs the heart's possession ;  
Lull'd are the ecstasies of youth,  
The glowing meteors of untruth  
    Extinguish'd at discretion.

## XXXIV.

A wrestler with the winds no more !  
The visionary life is o'er,  
    I steer to safer soundings,  
And lower the anchor of my lot  
Far down in some secluded spot  
    Among your grand surroundings.

## XXXV.

Oh ! valleys of the Grampian mould !  
Oh ! valleys red with virgin gold—  
    Rife with the angler's treasure ;  
With poet's blessings doubly blest,  
Your memory is a joy imprest,  
    The emphasis of pleasure !

## XXXVI.

He contem-  
plateth the  
Tay and its  
finny trea-  
sures.

Before me, in its brave array,  
Expands the royal Strath of Tay  
With castle crown'd and palace ;  
Emerging through the summer's haze,  
Magnificent in every phase,  
Queen of our northern valleys !

## XXXVII.

The highway of the salmon rolls,  
Life-throng'd, below thy heathery knolls  
And resonant with tidings  
From the far sea—a thoroughfare  
Whose traffic is the rich and rare,  
From Nature's secret hidings.

## XXXVIII.

In the chaste keeping of thy bed  
The shining nuggets of the '*redd*'  
Await the summer's pleasure,  
Which coins them into life, and drapes  
With jewell'd sails their tiny shapes,  
An argosie of treasure !

## XXXIX.

He indulgeth  
in a train of  
reflections.

Musing on thee, springs frozen long  
Burst into life with voice of song,  
Seal'd memories break their bondage :  
The strange, resuscitating power  
Steals o'er me in that rapt'rous hour,  
Below the wavy frondage.

## XL.

The fairy forms of early loves  
 Once more come trooping through the groves,  
     Aglow with their old graces ;  
 In flowers of amaranth deck'd, and fed  
 With nectar and the generous bread  
     Which care and age displaces.

## XLI.

Crowd other shapes into the scene  
 Of statelier mould and prouder mien,  
     A noble band ! renowning  
 The path they trod by charm of song,  
 And the o'erlookings of the throng  
     At their high bidding crowning.

The spirits of  
 great anglers  
 pass before  
 him.

## XLII.

To these great masters of the art,  
 All nature bow'd the inner heart  
     In generous reliance,  
 And her round wonders gave to light  
 Stoled in the beauty and the might  
     Of Poetry and Science.

## XLIII.

Among them, stateliest of all,  
 Moves Wilson, like a second Saul,  
     Erect with presence regal ;  
 Flash over whose rapt countenance  
 Alternate with the lion's glance,  
     The lightnings of the eagle.

## XLIV.

No crown wears he of Art's design,  
 No symbol of the right divine  
     His noble form investing ;  
 Those ample brows in fire enshrined  
 Declare the empire of the mind,  
     Its sov'reignty attesting.

## XLV.

A poet in the truest sense,  
 The voice of whose intelligence  
     Prevails o'er hill and hollow ;  
 With lofty impulses and grand  
 Inspiring our fatherland,—  
     The high priest of Apollo

## XLVI.

How of thy rivers staid and scared,  
 Robb'd of their life—their song impair'd,  
     Shall I recount the glory,  
 King-honour'd Fife ! whose sturdy thanes  
 Hurl'd back the yellow-bearded Danes  
     Into the surges hoary ?

The angler  
 descanteth  
 on the rivers  
 of Fife, and  
 their vicissi-  
 tudes.

## XLVII.

Among the beautiful, their names  
 Will live, coeval with the Thames,  
     As tuneful and engaging ;—  
 Leven ! whose liquid syllables  
 Flow forth as from untroubled wells,  
     Heart-moving, grief-assuaging.

## XLVIII.

Eden ! from Heaven's vocabulary  
Chosen by the ear of Harmony,  
At the grand consecration,  
When the Earth's first deputed lord  
Named, as instructed by the Word,  
Each wonder of Creation.

## XLIX.

Of his fair bower, before the Fall,  
An echo and memorial,—  
The promise-word of pardon,  
That to the listening ear of faith  
Bears tidings of a conquer'd Death,  
And a celestial garden.

## L.

Fair names, symbolic of thy life  
And rural beauty, Royal Fife !  
In days, alas ! departed ;  
When all the juices of the soil  
Were vigorous, and no hand of spoil  
Enslaved them, or diverted.

## LI.

Changed as they are, I hold in mind  
Their better days, when, unconfined,  
They glided through the valleys ;  
When on their surface lusty trout  
Gamboll'd, or put to sudden rout  
The minnows on the shallows.

The angler  
pursueth his  
sport and  
train of  
thought

## LII.

Where Daër, like a dower'd bride,  
Strikes league of love with infant Clyde,  
In hearing of the plover ;  
Surrendering her ampler power,  
To the strong impulse of the hour,—  
The frenzy of the lover !

## LIII.

All the sad presages that strew  
Thy history, in the long ago,  
Rise up, like apparitions,  
Fair Clyde ! when in thy valley's heart  
I rest—suspending my loved art,  
To con thy rude traditions.

## LIV.

Reflected on these waters bright,  
The image of a val'rous knight  
With this day-dreaming mingles—  
The patriot warrior, at whose name  
Even still, when jealous of her fame,  
The ear of Scotland tingles.

## LV.

Assertor of his country's rights—  
The flower and glory of her knights—  
Our boyhood's hero, Wallace !  
With whose high purposes were blent,  
Stirr'd by the red fires of the tent,  
Sweet images of solace :



## LVI.

Welcomed not least the dream of peace,—  
A coming period of release,  
    When, like a breast of surges,  
In the ebb-tide, the Southron hosts  
Shall hurry homeward scared by ghosts  
    And wail of fun'ral dirges.

## LVII.

In these anticipated joys,  
Thy waters held prevailing voice,  
    And lent to the illusion ;  
Rose up alike to mind and ear,  
Old Corra Linn, and haunts as dear  
    Took part in the confusion.

## LVIII.

All old delights came crowding back  
Along the consecrated track  
    Where mem'ry holds her treasures.  
The sports and frolics of the boy  
Stirr'd up an augury of joy—  
    A sense of coming pleasures.

## LIX.

Doubtless, in musings such as these,  
Encircled by fond images,  
    The patriot's vigils fled ;  
Predominant throughout thy voice,  
Laden with promises of joys,  
    And triumphs uncompleted.

The angler  
shifteth the  
scene of his  
musings to  
that portion  
of the land  
of Burns,

## LX.

Where Annan and her sister Nith  
Toward the Solway's radiant frith,  
With summer off'rings freighted,  
Steer, side by side, in maiden glee,  
Blending with songs of liberty  
The theme of love requited.

## LXI.

Such songs sang Scotland's dearest bard,  
Brightening the verdure of the sward  
Throughout his native valleys ;—  
Gifting the daisy at his feet  
With charms, and drawing music sweet  
Out of the blue bell's chalice.

## LXII.

Long may his noble lays assert  
Their peaceful sway, and stir the heart  
With melody inviting ;  
So long as our bright rivers run  
Seaward, and glisten in the sun,  
Rejoicing and delighting !

## LXIII.

He dwelleth  
with delight  
on the happy  
days spent  
by him in  
Eskdale,

Where nurtured amid pastoral slopes,  
With merry Esk fair Liddel copes,  
Fair Liddel ! brimm'd with story  
Of olden time, when from his hold  
The Armstrong with his reivers bold  
Rode roughly to the foray !

## LXIV.

Thy dewy uplands often roll  
Before me, knoll succeeding knoll,  
At the mind's invocation,  
Charm'd Esk ! a panorama bright  
Which waves before the inner sight  
In endless fascination.

## LXV.

Thy waters dancing at its feet,  
Billholm smiles out from its retreat,  
Lit up with happy faces.  
And jubilant with merry prate  
Of children—a dear friend's estate,  
The bower of the Graces !

## LXVI.

Year after year, when summer tide  
Is ebbing, and the river-side  
Teems with excess of riches,  
I give surrender to the spells  
That circumvent thy dewy dells—  
The beauty that bewitches ;

## LXVII.

Climbing to every vantage ground  
Of distant prospect, round and round—  
To their green sources tracing  
The flowery glens that part the hills—  
Listening the whisper of the rills  
Or their starr'd tenants chasing.

## LXVIII.

To the delights that make thee dear,  
 These add their salutary cheer,  
     Thou warbler among rivers !  
 Companion of the mind, sweet Esk !  
 Whose course is as the arabesque  
     Of light brok'n into shivers.

## LXIX.

The angler  
 bendeth his  
 steps to \* \* \*

Where Dee leaves stealthily his den  
 Of mists to ravish laughing Ken  
     And on her bosom revel ;  
 Appropriating haugh and brae,  
 All through the breadth of Galloway,—  
     Flower'd glade and rushy level.

## LXX.

Below Threave's tragic walls, whose lord  
 Cross'd with his sovereign speech and sword  
     In insolent ambition,  
 Where Mollance Meg, with visage swart,  
 To Douglas of the bloody heart  
     Tender'd her fiery mission.

## LXXI.

He is moved  
 by the recol-  
 lection of his  
 successes,

On lakes whose depths no glancing oar  
 Disturbs or scares the beaded store  
     Which, in the dawns of summer,  
 And at the dusks, with widening ring,  
 O'er the lull'd ranges pasturing,  
     Rewake the expiring tremor.

## LXXII.

Those massive cisterns hewn of old  
When the retiring Deluge roll'd  
    Back on its desolations,  
Leaving in margins broad and rife  
Memorials of some mighty strife  
    Which bared the 'old earth's' foundations.

## LXXIII.

With few ambitions stretching out  
Beyond the capture of the trout,  
    In a long life of dreaming,  
I've made my study to delight  
The thousand hoards of water-might  
    Among our mountains gleaming.

## LXXIV.

Poets have link'd them with their song  
To deeds of rapine and of wrong—  
    To elements of mystery—  
To the fierce feuds of clan with clan,  
And the wild wails of Ossian—  
    The cradle-songs of history.

## LXXV.

Painters have studied, soul and heart,  
Beside them, the enrapturing art  
    Which, at their happiest blending,  
Or darkest strife, perpetuates,  
Of heaven and earth, the loves and hates,  
    The union and the rending.

## LXXVI.

Philosophy hath girt them round,  
 And plied with theories profound  
     Their origin and uses ;  
 The slimy, huge pre-Adamites  
 That in the weary primal nights  
     Lay lurking in the sluices ;

## LXXVII.

Strange forms ! congenial to the haze  
 That wrapt them in their dawning days,  
     When spake the Power Eternal,  
 And chaos fled, and by degrees  
 Establish'd were the harmonies,  
     And seasons harsh and vernal.

## LXXVIII.

The angler  
 draweth a  
 comparison.

But dearer than all these to me,  
 Dearest of streams that seek the sea  
     And lave old Scotland's heather,  
 Art thou—the arches of whose skies  
 Spann'd my youth's ardent paradise,  
     And linked its joys together.

## LXXIX.

Tweed ! royal Tweed ! nor less I love  
 The vassal streams that with thee rove  
     In the glad pride of duty,  
 Whose mingling waters swell thy state—  
 Thy tide of song invigorate  
     And amplify thy beauty.

## LXXX.

Chief of them all—renown'd not least  
 In Border tale of love and feast,  
     Fierce wooing and rough wedding,  
 Of sudden raid and stubborn siege,  
 Of wizard-craft and sacrilege,  
     Rope, fagot, and blood-shedding,

## LXXXI.

Rolls Teviot, opulent in song,  
 From liquid throat and silver tongue  
     In the night's list'ning watches  
 And at the sun-break, ere the dove  
 Mellows the chorus of the grove—  
     Pouring his ballad snatches.

He enlarges  
 on Teviot  
 and the rivers  
 of the Border  
 land.

## LXXXII.

And ever from his joyous moun  
 When heaven's breath ambles from the south,  
     Flow measures light and airy,  
 Responsive of those spirit-sounds  
 That link with Roxburgh's dreamy mounds  
     The revels of the fairy.

## LXXXIII.

A river opulent in sport  
 Not less than song—the choice resort  
     And watchword of its lovers ;  
 Whose every stretch and turn abound  
 In scaly life, and all around  
     The feather'd fills the covers.

## LXXXIV.

Glorious old Teviot ! I hold faith  
In thy bright waters to the death—  
My heart beats to their timing ;  
They travel with me in my dreams,  
And greet the ear, when morning beams,  
With their melodious chiming.

## LXXXV.

For, all the spring and summer long,  
And in the autumn-tide, my song  
Upon their banks is chaunted ;  
And waves untired the angler's wand  
Where waved of old revengeful brand  
And rival banners flaunted.

## LXXXVI.

As fair, not dearer, yet as dear,  
Persuading more the inner ear—  
The inner vision moving—  
Ettrick and Yarrow, hand in hand,—  
The sisters of the Forest land,  
Divide my spirit's loving.

## LXXXVII.

With *them*, as with creations bright  
Of inexhaustible delight,  
My boyhood's fancy revell'd ;  
And loves and friendships too were form'd,—  
Some chill'd by time and others warm'd,—  
Some by the mower levell'd.



## LXXXVIII.

In these disturbing memories,  
 This chequer'd page of sympathies,  
     St. Mary's has its holding ;  
 Belovèd lake ! whose fair expanse  
 Before me heaves, in daily trance,  
     With all the hills enfolding ;

He revisiteth  
 St. Mary's  
 Loch,

## LXXXIX.

And resting on their heights the skies  
 That watch thee with unwearied eyes,  
     And lull with soft caresses ;  
 All that adorn'd and made thee dear—  
 That fill'd the fisher's heart with cheer,  
     Into the vision presses.

## XC.

An angler's blessing with thee dwell,  
 My hostess, hale and ven'erable,  
     God keep thee long in fettle !  
 Tibbie ! old friend, whose beaming face  
 Withdrawn, would leave an empty place—  
     A shadow on the settle.

and passeth  
 into the old  
 howff.

## XCI.

Nigh forty summers have roll'd by,  
 Since, on an evening in July,  
     By Yarrow's bard directed,  
 I first beneath thy homely thatch  
 Found harbour and an open latch—  
     A welcome unaffected.

## XCII.

Often since then, on weary feet  
Trudging, I've hail'd the loved retreat  
    From Meggat's chimeful river.  
As relish'd still, the rural fare—  
The welcome which awaits me there  
    As hearty found as ever.

## XCIII.

No change in this ; but at thy hearth  
Changes peep out and check the mirth  
    That thoughtless tongues have started :  
Shadows from Grave-land on me wait,  
And lead me back to meditate  
    Upon the days departed.

## XCIV.

Speak out the staid memorials  
Depending from the rustic walls ;  
    These registers are teeming  
With memories of friendships dear—  
Of palmy feasts and olden cheer  
    That set the soul a-dreaming.

## XCV.

Wilson was in his glory then ;  
The Shepherd flourish'd rod and pen—  
    Guests oft at thy snug shieling,  
Blythe Tib !—each in himself a host ;—  
Then the bards angled, and their toast  
    Aspired to heaven's blue ceiling.

## XCVI.

Waved vigorous wand in these glad days,  
Aytoun, whose patriotic lays

Keep march with Scotland's standard ;  
Then Gordon moved the list'ning hills  
With eloquence, and by the rills  
Sage Ferrier, musing, wander'd.

## XCVII.

With reason may our Scottish North  
Boast of its joyous wellings forth—

Its sea-arms, salmon-haunted—  
Its tidal flow, which foetid sewer  
Hath not disturb'd, nor yet the roar  
Of engine disenchanted ;—

The angler  
reverteth to  
our Norland  
rivers, and  
concedeth to  
them a cer-  
tain measure  
of superi-  
ority.

## XCVIII.

The tarns that with its purpling heights  
Associate dark, forbidden rites

And mysteries illegal—  
Lochans at which the red-deer slakes  
His noon-day thirst, and, as morn breaks,  
His matins holds the eagle.

## XCIX.

Our Lowland valleys bear to these  
A world of fair affinities,

But want the features awing—  
The solitude—the rocky tracks  
Appointed to the cataracts—  
The morn's grand curtain-drawing.

## C.

The voices which from steep to steep  
Call, when the storm-breath stirs the deep,  
And winds and waters wrestle ;—  
The silences profound which brood  
Upon the mountain solitude,  
And in the hollows nestle ;—

## CI.

The wonder and amaze which dwell  
With the sublime and terrible,  
On edge of chasms wide-yawning ;  
On brink of precipice, round which  
Lie coil'd, in luring folds and rich,  
The mist-bands of the dawning.

## CIII.

Freely concede we to the North,  
And its displays of savage worth,  
Pre-eminence in splendour ;—  
The glory which is rapt and free  
From taint of gross humanity,  
The excellence of grandeur !

## CII.

Our valleys are but tame to hers—  
Our summits stoled in minnivers,  
With her rough fronts contrasted ;  
We have few lakes whereof to vaunt ;  
Our torrents hold no summer chant,  
Nor rave through forests blasted.

## CIV.

And yet to me, a life and grace  
 Environ them, which find no place  
 Apart from human dwelling ;  
 The joy of beauty undisturb'd—  
 The sympathy which flows uncurb'd  
 From the heart's fountain welling.

He recover-  
 eth ground in  
 Border-land,  
 and windeth  
 up line.

## CV.

Here, on the tryst-ground of regard,  
 Embrace the Angler and the Bard,  
 And interchange their greetings ;  
 Here ; not among the crags and 'storms,  
 But circled by familiar forms,  
 They hold their kindred meetings.

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 SUTHERLANDSHIRE.

AN invitation from the late Mr. Andrew Young to fish the Shin, led me, in 1850, to make arrangements for visiting Sutherlandshire, and forming an acquaintance with its numerous rivers and lakes. I had previously met Mr. Young at the house of my friend, the late James Wilson, Esq., F.R.S.E., brother of Christopher North, and listened with pleasure to the account of his experiments in salmon breeding and marking—the results of which, although corroborated by those of similar experiments made at Stormonthfield and elsewhere, are still received with some measure of incredulity on Tweed-side. My quarters, while on Shin-side, were divided betwixt Lairg and Achinduich—the latter a farm-house in connexion with extensive sheep-walks.

Both weather and water were in a most unfavourable state for salmon-fishing; the former bright and oppressively hot, the latter small and clear. Moreover, the pest of gnats was at its height; and no one but he who has had experience of the Sutherland midge can imagine what torture this very insignificant demon puts one to. My take on the upper water, which, owing to the long drought, and the difficulty in consequence the fish had in surmounting the Falls at Shinness, was but thinly stocked, consisted merely of three grilse; but I had the consolation of being told by Mr. Young, that a party of anglers, including 'Ephemera,' had thrashed the same stretch of river for the preceding ten days, and only encreased a single fin.

On the day following, I selected Loch Shin as my field of action, in the high hope of capturing a specimen or two of the *Salmo ferox*. For this purpose, proceeding to Lairg, I engaged a boat, but failed in securing the services of the ferryman, Mackay, recommended to me by Mr. Young. A puritanical-looking Highlander, however, responding to the name of Donald, was at my disposal; and save that he lost me a lot of valuable time by insisting on the necessity of providing myself with baits for trolling with out of the small lake which subtends Loch Shin, instead of procuring them, as I showed him how to do, from the feeders of the main loch, did his work with the oar in good style, and evidently knew the places where the big trout were likely to be taken. It was not, however, until late in the afternoon that I succeeded in hooking and landing the desired specimen, a *ferox* of about six pounds, my fly-rod in the interim having effected the capture of some nice trout, ranging in weight from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. to half a lb. A portion of the following day was devoted to the examination of Mr. Young's collection, and discussing with its owner certain points in the natural history of the salmon, etc. We were not altogether at one on the habits of the otter; but I agreed with him to the letter as to the ravages com-

mitted by the common river trout among the salmon fry and on the salmon 'redds.'

In the evening I took a stroll in company with my friend, the then tenant of Achinduich, to Shinness, with the view of witnessing the efforts of the fish to overcome the falls. From what I saw there, and have elsewhere seen, I am quite convinced that a newly-run, well-conditioned salmon, in July and August, can, on reaching, by a spring or leap, the point at which the descent of water breaks, make its way up the neck or compact portion of the fall, let it be ever so perpendicular, by the pushing and steering powers of its fins and tail. Shinness, independent of its scenic attractions, presents, in the month of August, perhaps as good a point of observation as any in Scotland for ascertaining the climbing capabilities of the salmon, and forming an opinion of its determinedness when in quest of eligible breeding-ground.

On the 12th of August, I proceeded by mail-gig to Loch Inver, the inn whereof, along with the rod-fishings of the river, were then in the hands of Mr. Dunbar. Arriving there, I found assembled a party of anglers, and among them the late Mr. Fitzgibbon, the well-known and highly appreciated contributor on fishing subjects, etc., to *Bell's Life*. We were soon, as may be supposed, on terms of intimacy; and in the course of the evening strolled out together, rod in hand, along the banks of the Inver, which, owing to the want of rain, was in a most exhausted state. A sea-trout of two or three pounds' weight was the sum-total encreased by me, after an hour's perseverance. Next day, in company with Mr. Fitzgibbon, I gave trial to some of the most likely pools higher up, but only succeeded in raising two salmon which came towards the fly with seeming distrust, and refused all further recognition of my lures. This indifference, no doubt, proceeded from the reduced state of the river and the prevailing heat; but it was also evident, and admitted by Mr. Dunbar, that the Inver was poorly stocked; a conclusion I came to from the

fact of not observing a single fish plunge throughout the whole stretch of water, extending for at least three miles, fished over by me, up and down, on this occasion.

On the 14th I crossed over to the Kirkaig, with old Sandy M'Torquil, the pensioner, as my guide; but beyond basketing a few finnocks achieved nothing. Salmon-fishing was evidently at a stand-still, so resolving in the meantime to give it up, I accepted Mr. Dunbar's kind offer to accompany Mr. Fitzgibbon and myself to the lower end of Loch Assynt; after testing which, we were promised the opportunity of forming an acquaintance with some of the smaller trouting lochs (there are at least two hundred belonging to the district) in its vicinity. It became necessary, in order to fish the latter properly, to transport to them a boat—the margins of most of them being unsafe to venture on with the foot; and all access to where the trout lay being shut up at that season of the year by aquatic vegetation. Their proximity to the Inver, however, at a point where fishing-cobles were kept, made this a matter of little difficulty. In the *Angler's Companion* I find I have already taken notice of a haul made by Dunbar with the long-net at a bend on the Inver, for the purpose of showing us how prolific and fish-sustaining this river really is. The interlude I refer to was performed on our way up, and although Mr. Dunbar expressed himself dissatisfied with the result, in the matter of yellow trout particularly, it quite astonished the lookers-on.

I may here mention that, while at Loch Inver, I dedicated two or three hours to the testing of the trouting capabilities of its river. The scene of my operations was at the head of one of its expansions, not very far from Loch Assynt, and as the sky was cloudless and the day calm, I had resort to my favourite summer lure, the worm. In the time above specified, my diary speaks to my having taken twenty-five trout, weighing upwards of eleven lbs.

Reverting to our exploring trip with Dunbar, we made trial of



Loch Assynt and the lesser lochs holding communication with the Inver, with, as might be expected (certainly at least not to my own disappointment), a very limited measure of success; but to record the result met with, as affecting the repute of the places tested, would be absurd,—the season, weather, condition of water, and time of day, all operating in prejudice of sport.

While fishing on Loch Assynt, under a cloudless sky, Dunbar called our attention to two eagles of the golden species, hovering in the distance, over a glen or corrie that stretched beyond the hills guarding the south-west extremity of the lake. They were watching, there could be no question, the expiring struggles of a sheep or lamb, accidents to which are common in that quarter, and were preparing to make a descent on the quarry. Above them, at a respectful distance, floated three or four ravens, a number which, during the short time we regarded them (quarter of an hour at the most), was increased to no fewer than nine, the new-comers winging their way at a vast height from their beils on the craggy side of Ben More.

On the day following, I took advantage of the mail-gig to return to Innisindamph, where we had baited on the journey from Lairg, and from which point I had arranged to visit Muloch Corrie, or the Gillarroo Lake; also to test, by trolling, the repute of Loch Assynt as a *ferox*-containing sheet of water. There, after breakfasting, I engaged a boat and provided myself with trolling-bait from the Trailigill burn—a matter of no great difficulty, as it swarmed with small trout. My successes among the *feroces* of Loch Assynt were limited to two specimens, one of six and another of four pounds; but with the fly-rod I was on the whole fortunate, killing several dozens of fine yellow trout. The best portion of these were taken from a bay or inlet close to Ardvrock Castle, celebrated as the stronghold in which, when taken prisoner by the Laird of Assynt in 1650, the Marquis of Montrose was confined. While fishing from the boat, two golden

eagles, male and female, crossed within shot, and a red deer came down to the water's edge and stood unconcernedly within a hundred yards of us.

On the 21st, I scrambled up the face of the celebrated limestone-rock, and wended my way towards Muloch Corrie, over a tract of ground, the most striking feature of which consisted of a vast range of cone-shaped pits, nine or ten feet in depth, and about the same in diameter. Their purpose I leave to the conjecture of the antiquarian; but taking them into combination with other singular features in the same locality, they appeared to me to have been used at one time as human abodes or retreats; possibly they formed the encampment of an army, or large hunting-party. Before reaching the Gillarroo loch I encountered a fall of snow (the heights of Cannisbe were in white array throughout the forenoon), the air became piercingly cold, and I resigned internally all expectations of capturing a specimen of the gizzard trout. I succeeded, however, in basketing as many as nine—a sufficient number to enable me, on a careful examination of their alleged peculiarities, to form my own opinion respecting them.

On descending by the course of the Trailigill river, which connects Muloch Corrie with Loch Assynt, I caught about two dozen trout, several of which were singularly marked. Of these, three or four exceeded a pound in weight.—(See *Angling Companion*, p. 20.) From Innisindamph I proceeded next day, per mail-gig, to Scourie. The drive is a delightful one; it comprehends a stretch of scenery unsurpassed by anything of the sort which can be viewed from a carriage-road in Scotland. Descending the heights, five or six miles from our starting-point, the eye becomes arrested by Cunaig,—not the dorsal ridge you see at Loch Inver, but its Titan front—a huge frowning precipice, scarred with water-courses, and, in the very centre of its forehead, disclosing a hollow recess, or orbless eyehole, directed towards the Atlantic, which, at no great distance, is stretched before you in

glorious amplitude. Yet the mountain-wall and swelling ocean are but pertinents in the scene, for involuntarily from *them* the eye turns towards those mighty passes, Glen Dhu and Glen Cuil, by which Ben More and its accessory hills find escape for the accumulations of snow and rain. There, and on Kylesku, with its dark barrier of waters and lonely ferry-house, the gaze of the traveller falls, I cannot say rests, for there is no lulling influence in the scene, but much that amazes and excites, if it does not terrify and bewilder.

Having arrived at Scourie, I called upon my old friend Evan-der MacIvor, Esq., one of the factors to his Grace the Duke of Sutherland, and obtained the requisite permission to angle over the district in his charge, comprising Edderachylis and Scourie. I was also favoured by him with a note to Lord Anson, who, along with Lord Grosvenor, was at that time lessee of the deer-shootings and rod-fishings on the Laxford, and surrounding Loch Stack. By his Lordship I was courteously received, and made welcome to the use of one of his boats on the lake, as well as invited to take a day's angling on the river. The former was fished by me under considerable disadvantages, the day being highly tempestuous, and the boat under the management of two boys, one of whom was quite unaccustomed to the oar. I was also unprovided with a landing-net, the want of which lost me a number of heavy trout. As it was, I captured, in about five hours, thirty-one sea-trout, many of which were two-pounders; and one, the pride of the lot, a beautifully proportioned newly run fish, exceeded five pounds in weight. I also caught several nice common trout, the largest about three pounds. This fellow I happened to hook by the tail, and, in the next throw, got hold of another of equal weight in the same manner. I also, by means of a gaudy grilse-fly, in a deep part of the loch, secured a char, or torgoch, a fish up to that date not known to be an inhabitant of Loch Stack.

The day following I fished the lower pools of the Laxford. They were considerably swollen, and the fish evidently were on the move upwards. On reaching the turn half-way up the river, I raised a salmon seven or eight pounds in weight, the fly a small butcher, and shortly after had the satisfaction of hooking and landing him. This fish, and upwards of a dozen sea-trout, one of which weighed about four pounds, completed the day's sport.

On Monday the 26th I shifted my quarters to Rhiconich, being recommended by Mr. MacIvor to test one or two of the lakes to which salmon had access, in the vicinity of that place of halt. Accordingly, on arriving there, I proceeded, under guidance of Hugh Mackay, the landlord's son, to Garbet Beg Loch, a small sheet of water connected with the sea by a burn or rivulet—for in summer the Inchard is of that character—two miles in length. On this lake, and at its outlet, I captured two salmon, of the respective weights of eleven pounds and eight pounds, a couple of newly-run grilises, thirty-eight sea-trout, and a number of common black trout of various dimensions. I was unfortunate, however, in losing a magnificent fish, after a run of nearly half an hour. The fellow took what is called a sulky fit, and lay down with a weight of forty yards of line upon him in a central part near the head or neck of the lake, close evidently to a large rock or boulder. I felt him distinctly sawing away at my casting-line against its rugged edge—a feat he accomplished, just as I was in the act of slipping a wire-ring, constructed hurriedly from the arming of a pike-hook, down my line, with a view to start him afresh.

On the following morning I betook myself again to Garbet Beg Loch, but fishing was out of the question, not a breath of wind ruffling its surface. From the upper loch, Garbet More, a slight breeze prevailing, I picked out a fair-sized sea-trout. Retracing my steps to the Inchard, I had the satisfaction, in rough, heavy water, among a succession of rapids and small cataracts—

the result of drenching torrents of rain which had fallen during the night, of hooking and playing to shore a beautiful grilse of seven pounds in weight. It required some management to overpower him, as he led me a dance over rocks and perilous banks for more than a quarter of a mile before he gave in. I also added a dozen or so of sea-trout to the contents of my creel.

From Rhiconich, next day, I proceeded towards Durine of Duirness, in a spring-cart belonging to Mr. Mackay. On reaching the Dionard or Grudie river, then in a highly flooded state (the rains, since I left Loch Inver, had been of daily occurrence), I alighted, and despatching the conveyance with my luggage in advance, fished leisurely over some inviting stretches of the river without success. At length I captured a fine sea-trout, and shortly afterwards another, each weighing upwards of two pounds. On reaching the stream which headed the cruive-dyke pool, and throwing my persuader over a sunken rock that caught my eye, I got hold at last of a splendid salmon, which, after a run of ten minutes, submitted to its fate. Three sea-trout, in addition to what I had already taken, completed my spoils, which I had some difficulty in carrying to Duirness, in the midst of a terrific storm of wind and rain.

On the following day I proceeded, crossing Huclim Ferry, to the river Hope, to which I gave a brief but satisfactory trial—killing, along with a couple of whitlings, a fair specimen of the *Salmo eriox*, or bull-trout, a species of the *salmonidæ* not often found in the northern rivers of Scotland. It was past midnight before I arrived, along with my luggage (to convey which I had some difficulty, after crossing Loch Eribol, in procuring the services of a girl and cart; a man or boy was not to be had) at Tongue Ferry, the landing-place at the west side of which lay at a considerable distance from where the ferrymen dwelt. Left in the lurch by my fair conductress, who I saw had not calculated on arriving with my traps at so untimely an hour,

and was eager, after fulfilling her part of the agreement, to return home, I had to push my way to the only habitation, made recognisable as such by the light proceeding from it, in view. Fortunately it was the abode of the ferrymen, and as fortunately I found them to be obliging, good-natured fellows, who thought nothing of being roused from their slumbers by a Sassenach to do night-work.

On being ferried across—it was as dark as Erebus during the passage—I foolishly intrusted to one of them the care of my fishing-rods, three in number. How it was managed I do not know; but on my arrival at the inn at Kirkaboll, about three in the morning, I found the tops, all but one, seriously injured, and in order to repair them was necessitated to expend a large portion of the forenoon. This done, I hurried to Tongue House, in order to obtain the necessary permit from Mr. Horsburgh, the late factor on the Reay district of the Duke's estates. Much to my disappointment, he had just left home, on the way to Bettyhill of Farr, situated on the Naver river. Having hired a gig, I pushed forward in the same direction; but it was late in the afternoon before I met with Mr. Horsburgh, and obtained from him the desired liberty. Of all the rivers in Sutherlandshire, the Naver, in the state in which I saw it, is certainly the most attractive; I mean to anglers. My friend Professor Blackie, in his review of the changes it has undergone, puts them and their likings quite out of consideration. Its course embraces, independent of the ample lake bearing the same name, at least twenty miles of choice pool and stream, which, all obstructions to the ascent of fish removed, presents as fine a range of salmon-casts as can be wished for. It was four P.M. before I wetted fly in this river. Its streams were in a highly swollen state, and it was impossible to detect with exactness the usual fastnesses of the royal fish. Not being satisfied with the state of the water at the spot I was recommended to try, I wandered

up to the pool superintending the cruives, and having attached a small but showy fly to my casting-line, directed it across to what, I had an idea, was likely ground for a good fish. Immediately I had him fast—a beautiful grilse, fresh from the sea, the *monoculus* attached to his pate and shoulders. Its death-blow dealt, I pushed up the stream, and quickly captured a brace of sea-trout. I also raised a large fish, and was on the point of giving him a change of fly, when the plunge of a salmon fifty yards or so farther up arrested my attention. Marking with the eye the spot where it took place, and considering it judicious to allow the fish I had just raised a short rest, I scrambled along the face of a precipitous bank towards a convenient ledge of turf and rock, whence I could command the upper portion of the cast. A few throws brought my fly beautifully round over the place in question, and up, in taking style, came the salmon, every inch of his length visible on the surface, and his strong jaws closing eagerly upon the fatal lure. For an instant he remained immovable, but the hook was firmly lodged in his gristly lip, and I held bent over him a powerful rod, steadily but not determinedly; for at length, as he became conscious of his position, and dashed across the river, taking its whole breadth at a single breath, I felt it high time to humour his movements, and gave line to his heart's desire. The first burst over, and line partially recovered, I had to make immediate preparations for a second, perhaps more vigorous one. The fish evidently showed an inclination to press downwards; and to follow him, in case he did so, seemed for the moment impracticable, as I had to wend my way along the foot of a precipitous scaur overhanging a deep, black pool. Other hazards also presented themselves in the shape of trees or brushwood, across the stunted stems of which I had to pass my rod from hand to hand. There was no time, however, to be lost, so after overcoming the last-mentioned but primary difficulty, I committed myself to the

river, which, along the foot of the scaur, discovered, barely distinguishable in its rising waters, a ledge of rock, along which, nearly waist-high, I managed to wade, and at length gain footing on a piece of sward subtending the lower end of the bank. By this time the recruited fish was again on the spin, and putting forth his full strength and speed; but I had now the master-hand of him, and after giving due indulgence to his vagaries, brought him safely, a goodly eighteen-pounder, to shore. The Naver was now flooding fast, and being thoroughly soaked through from head to foot, I took down my rod, with the intention of giving the river another and fairer trial before quitting that part of Sutherlandshire. This, however, owing to the continuing rains and consequent floods, I had no opportunity of doing.

At Mrs. Sidney's I was shown two fine specimens of the wild cat (*Felis catus*), killed by her son on the banks of the Naver a day or two before. In colour, they were a light grey (not so strongly marked or striped, however, as I have observed in the usual stuffed specimens), and in point of size, they bore a relation to the *Felis domesticus*, such as of itself, irrespective of other characteristics, was sufficient to support their claims to being *feræ*. On the 31st August I fished, along with a friend of Mr. Horsburgh's, an old schoolfellow, on the Borgie, Lochs Slam and Craggie; old Robert Ross, the gamekeeper, and his sons, managing the boat. Owing to high winds and rain, the lochs were in a very turbid state, and precluded all chance of falling in with a *ferox*. Our success with the fly also was very limited; but I was amused greatly, and my credulity put to the proof, by what fell from the lips of old Ross, touching a gathering of the *feroces* of Loch Loyal, witnessed by him some years ago, in one of the creeks or bays we rowed past. The whole surface of the inlet in question, covering an area of three or four acres, was described by him to have been alive and swatting with the fin-tops and tail-points of immense trout, assembled, as he



opined, for spawning purposes. Among salmon, preparatory to pairing, such congregatings are by no means unusual, and are accompanied at times, on a limited scale, with similar demonstrations. What appears, however, to be a multitudinous surface-movement, so to express it, may be caused by the evolutions of a very small body of fish,—the eye is so apt to be deceived under such circumstances.

*Monday, 2d Sept.*—Intended to have fished the Hope, along with Captain Horsburgh; but the rain coming down in torrents, and being unwilling to lose time, I pressed forward, instead, to Bettyhill. Found the Naver highly flooded, and could only succeed in taking a couple of small sea-trout. Salmon-fishing being out of the question, I proceeded next day, by mail, towards Melvich. Alighting at the banks of the Strathy river, I gave it, Loch Balligall, and other small lochs, a cursory trial. The day, however, being calm and sunny, my success was not great. On Wednesday I fished the Hallodale river, and was fortunate enough to capture two nice grilises out of five or six which rose at my fly. The river was quite out of order, and the day characterized by intense heat, and the presence of white dazzling clouds, which, every angler knows, are inimical to sport. My lure was a small dun-wing, esteemed a favourite fly in this quarter, as it is in many parts of Scotland, especially on the rivers connected with the Solway Firth.

From Melvich I proceeded to Thurso, and thence to Wick. While in Caithness, I fished several of its smaller streams; I also spent a day on Loch Watten, along with two gentlemen, connected officially with the district, who kept a boat upon the loch. We were fortunate enough to capture among us several dozens of fine trout, some of which were peculiarly marked, and much resembled fresh-run sea-trout, a species which for many years has been debarred, along with salmon, entrance into this fine expanse of water.

Next week I set out towards Golspie, and obtained permission to angle in the Brora and Fleet rivers. The former was in a very reduced state, no rains having fallen on the east coast for weeks. Immediately below the old cruives, however, I hooked, at the third cast, a fine salmon. Unfortunately, the hold taken was slight, and after a run or two, which indicated strength and good condition, he made his escape. Although I persevered the whole forenoon, the sky cloudless, as usual, I failed to raise another, and was content to devote the after portion of the day to the taking of finnocks. The rod-fishings on the Brora that season had been let, with a reserve in favour of his Grace or deputy, to three parties, who turned out to be all old acquaintances of mine, and celebrated anglers to boot. I met two of them at Inver Brora, and they gave me a very sorry account of the sport they had had; they had not, in fact, taken a single fish among them for the last ten days. While at Golspie I also fished the Fleet; and, although the day was bright and breezeless, filled my basket with beautiful sea-trout, in number twenty-five, some of which weighed nearly two pounds apiece. The pools I fished in were long, dead stretches of water, lying about a mile above the Mound, and were much hemmed in with alder brushwood. Not having a landing-net with me, I required to exhaust to the uttermost nearly every fish hooked, and then, taking hold of the line with my hand, haul him up the bank, or, reaching down, grasp him with my hand while panting on the water's surface. Of course I lost many, and among these some of the best, by this mode of treatment; but there was no help for it. On the 14th of September I left Golspie for the banks of the Shin, and in the course of the evening called upon my friend Andrew Young. He was very anxious that I should once more throw a fly over his river, the parties renting the rod-fishings from him having complained lately of want of sport, although the streams were in excellent trim, and, during ordi-

nary seasons, would not have failed to show fish in abundance. On application next morning to the lessee of the lower waters, those subtending Shinness, I was made welcome to try the casts from the Cromarty Pool downwards. Accordingly, with Donald Ross as an attendant, I commenced fishing a little before noon. The streams, as I mentioned, were apparently in good order, and although the day proved sunny, I had high hopes of being able to capture several fish. I persevered, however, most assiduously, for at least an hour and a half, trying all sorts of flies, without stirring a fin; and when a grilse at last came up to the hook, it was only to let me feel his weight, and then, with a shake of the tail, bid me good-bye. In somewhat of the same style, as I proceeded, at a spot called the Angus Turn, a large salmon paid me his respects; and it was not until I had arrived at the Bridge Pool that I had the satisfaction of hooking and landing a dun grilse. Below this point, at the Garden cast, I got hold of a good fish, but only for a few seconds. In the afternoon I again marched up as high as the Little Fall, below which, at dusk, I captured a beautiful newly-run grilse, the last, I may safely affirm, caught legally with the rod that season in the north of Scotland. Thus ended my piscatorial campaign in Sutherlandshire and the adjoining county, undertaken during a season which was universally admitted by salmon-fishers to have been the worst on record.

## EULOGISTIC—A COMPARISON.

### I.

THE streams of old Scotland for me !

The joyous, the wilful, and wild,  
The waters of song and of glee,  
That ramble away to the sea,  
With the step and free mirth of a child.

## II.

The valleys of England are wide,  
Their rivers rejoice every one ;  
In grace and soft beauty they glide,  
And water-flowers bloom at their side,  
As they gleam at the set of the sun.

## III.

But where are the speed and the spray—  
The dark lakes that welter them forth,  
Tree and mist nodding over their way—  
The rock and the precipice gray,  
That environ the streams of the North ?

## IV.

Who would seek for the salmon a home  
In track of the barbel or bream ?  
Rather holds he his fastness of foam  
Where the wraiths of the dark tempest roam,  
At the break of a wandering stream.

## V.

Ay ! there you will find him among  
The glens of old Scotland afar ;  
And up through her valleys of song,  
He silently glances along,  
In corslet of silver and star !

## VI.

The rivers of Scotland for me !  
They water the soil of my birth—  
They gush from the hills of the free,  
And sing as they seek the broad sea,  
With a hundred sweet voices of mirth !

## MORAYSHIRE.

A RESIDENCE at Nairn, extending over twelve months, in 1836-1837, made me fully acquainted with the lower portions of the river bearing the same name, on which the town stands. Nairn is rendered interesting by its contiguity to the sporting grounds traversed by Charles St. John and John Sobieski, and by its relations to the geological field on which quarried, with zeal and ability, the late Hugh Miller. The proximity of Cawdor Castle, and of the 'blasted heath' on the way to Forres, associate it, as a halting-place for the ambitious usurper, with the tragedy of *Macbeth*, and lead to the belief that the Swan of Avon had at one time waved dramatic wing among the wild swans that continue to pay periodical visits to the shores of the Moray Firth.

In point of size, the Nairn, or river of Alders, as the term signifies, is a third-class stream. Its waters, which have their sources near Loch Ruthven, on the heights of Inverness-shire, are remarkably pure and inviting; the process of filtration they undergo through sand and gravel in the lower division of their course, removing all mossy impurities, and imparting to them a sparkling freshness which does not belong to the general run of our northern rivers. At the same time, like its neighbour, the Findhorn, with which it maintains a parallel direction, the Nairn is readily acted on from the upland districts; and with startling suddenness, the contents of the thunder-cloud, or meltings of the snow in spring, frequently find their way through the strath, disturbing the existing relations of pool and ford. This river is visited by salmon as well as sea-trout; but the sport is precarious, depending much upon the character of the weather, in July and August. During the first four weeks of my acquaintance with it, I found its streams swarming with orange-fin smolts, to such an extent, that it was quite impossible to cast the trouting-

fly, with anything like patience, on account of them. In point of numbers they not only greatly exceeded the fresh-water trout, but completely eclipsed the black-fins, or genuine salmon-fry. These orange-fins, however, all disappeared before the end of June, a flood which took place in that month assisting them to the sea.

Previous to their descent, I caught in all, not far from the tideway, about half-a-dozen finnocks, on two or three different occasions. Shortly after they were gone, in the month of July, a speedy increase took place in the numbers of these fish. They also exhibited a corresponding growth, rising from one-third to half a pound.

In my diary I find entered the following details of sport:—13th July, eight finnocks and two dozen of fresh-water trout; 15th ditto, thirty finnocks and five fresh-water trout; 16th ditto, twenty-eight finnocks and nine fresh-water trout; and on the 18th, fifty-four finnocks and fifteen fresh-water trout. On the 20th, 21st, and 23d, a flood having occurred, I changed, it appears, my scene of operations to a part of the river running two or three miles above its discharge, and succeeded in capturing eight fine sea-trout from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. to 3 lb. weight each, and a small grilse. The finnocks had evidently not pushed up quite so far. During the remainder of July and a large portion of August, the river becoming affected by droughts, the sport was indifferent. I continued occasionally, however, to pick out a dozen or so of these small white trout betwixt the Cauld Dyke and the sea. On the 22d of August, the river being slightly swollen, I filled a large creel with them. From that date up to the close of the season, my success was varied; but it was chiefly to a higher portion of the Nairn that I then directed my attention, and the sport in consequence lay more among the adult sea-trout and grilses. I observed, however, that in September, when the annual close-time commenced, the condition of the finnocks was

not much inferior to what it was in July, and that the section of the river occupied by them did not extend more than a couple of miles from the sea.

In these particulars, namely, the condition of this little fish in September, and to some extent, the limited range of their inland migrations, a correspondence may be detected betwixt the habits of the Nairn finnock and the Tweed black-tail, or silver-white. They are very similar in appearance also, save that the black-tail carries the palm in point of size. When I came to make a comparison, however, of the finnock of this river (and I may add, the finnock of the Brora and Fleet in Sutherlandshire, which I had an opportunity of examining near the close of the season in 1850), with the small white trout of the Solway Firth, called indiscriminately the bill, the herling, and the whiten (the term whiten is the one usually applied to it at Carlisle), such points of resemblance no longer present themselves; the bills or herlings of the Esk, in Dumfriesshire, for instance, parting with their condition early in August, and venturing up, not merely the main river, but, like the *erioces*, distributing themselves over its tributaries at a distance of twenty miles and upwards from the salt water for the purpose of spawning.

At the opening of the season 1837, I renewed my attention to the white trout of the Nairn. During February and March, the heavier proportion of the fish landed by me consisted of whitling and grilse kelts. Mixed up with these, however, and forming one of the chief inducements to fish, were numbers of clean, well-conditioned finnocks, which, to all appearance, had very recently quitted the salt water; some of them, those taken below the Cauld Dyke, near to which the sea extended its influence, continuing to be acted on by the ebb and flow of the tide. I certainly caught among the spent trout several that were, or had been apparently finnocks or yearling fish; but whether the alteration in their condition had proceeded from mere confinement

in the fresh water, or from their having been engaged in spawning, I cannot with certainty say. The impression, however, remains with me that they had played a part on the breeding-grounds.

Of ten dozen and upwards of sea-trout landed in February and March on the banks of the Nairn, in 1837, one-third at least consisted of lively, well-flavoured finnocks, such as I have described. The flies employed in their capture were mostly of my own fabrication. The brown-mallard and guinea-fowl feathers, drake white-tips, the plumage of the turkey, woodcock, and grouse, were principally run upon in winging them, and, along with barn-fowl hackles of various shades, I employed peacock and ostrich herls, floss-silks, and worsteds, with silver tinsels, in making up representations of the feelers and bodies. Among the floss-silks and worsteds I found the light-greens, blues, oranges, and purples, carry the day. My after experience in sea-trout fishing has led me to place great reliance on these colours in certain conditions of water, on inland lochs especially; indeed, the large yellow trout, as well as the migratory species of many lakes in the north of Scotland, will be found disposed to take them. A small size of wire, say from No. 4 to No. 6 Adlington, I have always found to answer better in July and August than what is usually recommended. In flooded rivers, and to lakes highly ruffled, the larger sizes are, of course, better adapted; but the error in sea-trout fishing generally consists in the using of too large and too gaudy flies. I must not omit to say that the best killers I know of, taking them all in all, on rivers frequented by white trout, are march-browns and white-tops. In very clear water, a plain black hackle possesses, at the mouths of rivers, a singular amount of attraction over the finnock.

My sport on the Nairn, during the latter half of April and beginning of May, partook of some variation. Several snow-floods occurred in the course of the first-mentioned month, but



there was that in the general bearing of the river's temperature which encouraged the sea-holding whitlings to abandon their briny haunts and occupy the approach of the spawning-grounds. The first clean sea-trout of the season was taken by me on the neutral ground betwixt the Cauld Dyke and the sea, during ebb-tide, on the 17th of April. From that date on to the middle of May, when I left Nairn, I caught regularly, every lawful day, two or three of these whitlings. They were as lovely fish to look at, and as lively in action, as one could desire to have on the end of the trouting-line. Finnocks, in fair condition, were in the river along with them when I left it. On the 4th of May I took six of those fish, and on the 9th four.

I have enlarged on the finnock, or grilse-whitling, in its connexion with the river Nairn, because there it was I had the best opportunity of observing its habits. It is possible that, as occurs occasionally on Tweed and other salmon-rivers, irregularities may have prevailed throughout the portions of the two seasons under retrospection, but that they did so in the extreme, or involved in them any striking departure from the general rule as observed in that quarter, is not at all likely.

## THE RIVER NAIRN—A RETROSPECT.

### I.

WATER of Alders! what is the spell  
That binds me in spirit to thee?  
I cared not to drop my farewell,  
For I left no loved things in meadow or dell;  
Thou wert but a stranger with me.

### II.

Yet in my fancy often I turn  
From the streams of my choice, all apart—

From the silvan and blossomy burn,  
To the vale where thy waters murmur and mourn ;  
Their memory hangs on the heart !

## III.

Often in vision tempt me again  
Thy wild roving shoals ; but I bend  
O'er the silent shapes of the slain ;  
Not for me, from the depths of the billowy main  
The living thy channels ascend.

## IV.

Swift as an arrow glancing below,  
Speeds the silver trout of the sea ;  
And ever on thine autumnal flow  
The salmon laving his bosom of snow  
Wends hill-ward—but not for me !

## V.

Water of Alders ! memory brings  
Me back to each trodden fane,  
And its silent recall of banish'd things  
Unfeters affection's buried springs,  
And bids them gush forth again !

## THE IDENTITY OF THE FINNOCK AND ORANGE-FIN SMOLT.

THAT the finnock and the orange-fin smolt are of one and the same species, in fact identical, does not admit, in my judgment, of being questioned. As it forms, however, a subject of inquiry still pursued by the Tweed Commissioners, the term

*black-tail* or *silver-white* being applied to the finnock, I think it proper to state the ground on which, many years ago, I came to the above conclusion. At the mouth of the river Nairn, in 1836, I frequently took specimens in the transition stage, before the orange or deep yellow colour which distinguishes the pectoral fins of the whitling-smolt (not those of the *eriox*, or bull-trout, be it noticed), had completely disappeared, and a finish had been given by the armorer of Thetis to the scaly harness of the fish. I also caught the orange-fin, as such, in the salt water, at the distance, along the shores of the Moray Firth, of a mile or more from the said discharge; and this I did, singular to say, not only during the season of its descent in May and the beginning of June, but also in July and August on several occasions. Even on the latest of these, when the full-sized finnock had become established as a frequenter of the river in and above its tide-way, the orange-fins taken by me exhibited little or no change in their external appearance, although at that period they had partaken of marine sustenance, and had indulged in saline exercises for upwards of two months.

The circumstances attendant on the capture of these smolts may be briefly related. They were taken on calm evenings at high-water, in the season when the adult whitling or sea-trout are most inclined to press shorewards, being intent to prey upon the herring-*sile*, shrimps, and sand-launces which occupy the sea-margins, as well as prepared, in the event of a freshet, to enter the river. It was under the expectation of fastening upon one of these coasters, the presence of which in great numbers was betrayed by the surface-movements which took place within a few paces of the beach, that I brought my rod and line into play. The distance from the water's edge where I stood, to the point where the trout were congregated, was, I recollect, slightly beyond my command; at any rate, whether my flies passed over it or not, they failed in attracting notice. While drawing them

home, however, close to the shore, where the water at high tide was little more than knee-deep, the orange-fins rose at and seized them with considerable avidity.

As I have stated, even in August, after the general body of the smolts had been ten weeks at sea, and a crop of finnock occupied the lowest stretch of the Nairn water, little change could be detected in the external appearance of these loiterers. It is probable, notwithstanding, that they were passing through a process of transition, quite speedy enough to render them back to the river in the finnock stage during the early part of the year; indeed, I feel inclined to think that they formed part of the rearguard, or postponed relay, which furnished me with sport in the spring of 1837.

The observations made at Nairn on the orange-fin smolt, the finnock, and the *Salmo albus*, or whitling, have satisfied me fully on several points as to which differences of opinion still prevail. I am convinced, first of all, that the orange-fin smolt is the produce of the *Salmo albus*, and that the finnock stage is the intermediate one to the acquisition of its adult or fully-developed conformation. It may be mentioned that the fishermen in the locality above-named recognise two varieties of the sea-trout, independent of the *eriox*, which is a rare visitor, comparatively speaking, on the coast-line of the Moray Firth. In one of these the *maculæ* are larger, better defined, and more compactly set than in the other; the ground also, on which they figure, is decidedly darker. There is no further room, however, for establishing a specific difference betwixt the two sorts, unless we take into account the edible qualities, which are in favour of the dark-spotted variety, seeing that both herd and shoal together, and are uniform in their habits.

I am also convinced that the northern sea-trout does not travel to any great distance from the mouth of the river where it is bred; or, in other words, that its marine life is spent within

hail of its fresh-water abode. There are circumstances in connexion with many of our rivers which help to confirm this conviction. A very fair estimate of the quantity and quality of sea-trout in a stream paying direct tribute to ocean, may be formed from the nature and arrangement of the estuary grounds and their feeding accommodation. Rivers having in their vicinity an extensive tide-range, not acted on by heavy surfs, may be judged of favourably. Such a tide-range usually teems with those kinds of sustenance, animal and vegetable, which the sea-trout, in order to bring them into condition, require, and which may be said to be the ruling motive for their marine sojourn. At low water, the sun acts powerfully towards the production of such sustenance; and where scarcely any disturbance of the seabed takes place, the supply of food is usually so abundant as to obviate all necessity for the trout moving off in quest of it to other quarters. Of the river, or rather the estuary provision, I speak of, I could adduce many exemplifications; but the contrast, in the case of two rivers dissimilarly provided at the mouth or entrance, will be sufficiently set forth when I name the Laxford, in Sutherlandshire, and its neighbour the Inver, merely remarking, that the well-known superiority of the former, as a conduit for sea-trout, can be accounted for on no other grounds.

The Nairn water, which I have taken for my text, is peculiarly, I do not say richly, endowed with the provision in question. The features presented by the coast-line stretching south of the river are somewhat striking. The eye is carried towards a range of sand-hills, which tradition asserts were built up in the course of a single tempestuous night over a tract of land occupied previously by flourishing farms and their homesteads. Betwixt these barren eminences and the river's mouth, the tide-range, which is extensive, discovers at low water a series of lagoons, or salt-water dubs, where cockles, shrimps, small flounders, etc., are found in abundance. From these, no doubt, the sea-trout and finnocks

of the Nairn derive the chief portion of their marine nourishment in summer. They afford sustenance also to immense numbers and a great variety of aquatic birds, which are further encouraged by a range of brackish lakes, stretching in a southerly direction, to visit this portion of our coast.

While at Nairn in 1836, I paid two visits to the river Findhorn, armed merely with a trouting-rod. The salmon-fishings, as far up as the Ess, were, if I mistake not, at that period in the hands of the Messrs. Hogarth of Aberdeen, the liberty to use the rod, as at present, being reserved by the proprietors. Being satisfied in those days with the humbler pursuit of trout-fishing, I made no effort to obtain permission to try my hand over the salmon-casts of this truly superb river. On the occasion of my first visit to the Findhorn, I took advantage of a short cut leading from Nairn, by way of Moines, through Darnaway Forest, which brought me unexpectedly to its banks at a point—that opposite Altyre—perhaps unequalled in the landscape scenery of any of our Scottish rivers. The Heronry was then in its glory, and everything conspired to make deep the impression wrought on me by what I beheld. The following sonnet is but a very imperfect attempt to give words to some of the emotions which passed through my mind on the occasion :—

#### THE FINDHORN.

To the monastic mind thy solemn shade  
Kindly accords, bewildering Darnaway !  
Here, those retiring powers whose hermit sway  
The hordes of gross emotions hold obey'd,  
Reign indolent on bank or flowery glade.  
A deep unusual murmur meets my ear,  
As if the oak's Briarean arms were sway'd  
Far off in the wild wind. Like timorous deer,

Stay'd as he browses by the hunter's horn,  
I stand perplex'd, half-dreading the career  
Of coming whirlwind ; then, with conquer'd fear,  
Advancing slowly through a screen of thorn  
From edge of horrid rock, abruptly bold,  
Rushing through conduit vast, swart Findhorn I behold.

I find it recorded in my diary, 13th June 1836, that I took with the fly, on the Findhorn, thirty-four trout, a number of which were herring-sized, but none exceeded half a pound in weight.

Loch Belivat, a singularly situated sheet of water, about a mile in circumference, starts up into recollection when I look back upon my stay at Nairn. I obtained leave to fish it from the proprietor, Mr. Brodie of Lethen, and was given to understand that it contained trout of remarkable size and beauty. One of the peculiar features of this lake lies in its having no visible outlet—a peculiarity shared by Loch Achilty, in Ross-shire, from which, however, in other respects it completely differs. It is surrounded, notwithstanding, by attractions of its own, and these chiefly consist in its being the resort, during the breeding season, of immense numbers of sea-fowl. The period of the year when I visited it (May 3d, 1837), was that of their incubation ; and one end of the lake, of a swampy character, which it was impossible to find footing on, and even with the assistance of a boat gain proper access to, was covered to the extent of several acres with birds. As I approached the water's edge they rose in a vast cloud, saluting me with their discordant screams, and exposing to the eye many thousands of eggs—all of them safely guarded by the quaggy nature of the nursery instinct had selected. Of the promised trout I secured only two or three sorry specimens, but from the exposed situation of the loch, and the hitherto want of geniality in the weather, I came to the conclusion that I had made trial of it too early in the season.

A large section of the Spey skirts, and in part traverses, the county of Elgin, in its relation to Banffshire. It was to a portion of that section that, in the month of August 1861, I was induced to pay a visit, in the expectation of obtaining a day or two's salmon-fishing of a more exciting character than is usually, at that season of the year, met with on Tweedside. With Mr. Balmer, his Grace the Duke of Richmond's factor at Fochabers, I was slightly acquainted; and on application to him, received a permit (burdened with the usual condition, viz., to deliver up all fish taken to the kenner or overseer), which authorized me to angle for salmon over the lowermost stretch of the river, extending from the bridge downwards.

His account, however, of the sport met with on the reserved casts, by his Grace and friends, up to that date, was anything but cheering, and quite overturned the notions I had formed of Fochabers as a rod-fishing station. It tallied ill, in fact, with the numerous statements I had from time to time received and trusted to, respecting the superiority of the Spey, in that quarter especially, as an angling river; and when, from the lips of Mr. Balmer, who was himself a practical salmon-fisher, I heard the capture of five or six grilse in the course of a forenoon spoken of as a great feat, and one rarely accomplished, I began to wonder at my own credulity in having swallowed such extraordinary relations in regard to the plentifulness of the Spey salmon, the skill of its anglers, and the incomparable excellence of its casts. Such 'soughs' from the far North, I am at length disposed to listen to in the humour of the old fisherman at Trows, of whom the story is told, that on the occasion of a jolly meeting of his craft, a member of which, who rented a fishing higher up the river, having boasted of the enormous salmon he had recently taken with the rod, or in his cairn-nets, it was put to our friend, in a taunting way, by what oversight or want of skill he had permitted such monsters to pass up through his territory without



paying tithe, and how he himself, who commanded the approaches, never happened upon such big fish? ‘Aiblims,’ quoth he shrewdly, ‘it’s no the fish that are muckle bigger up the watter, but them that tak’ them are bigger story-tellers,’ a more expressive but less polite word being used by him as the clincher than the one I have introduced.

After lashing for three successive days, without the ghost of a rise, the stretch of water assigned to me, which I admit, however, was in galloping humour, and quite out of order the whole time, I began to conclude that I had come to Fochabers on a fool’s errand. As a final resort I took to trout-fishing, with results which did not exceed my expectation, and were quite on a par with the very unpromising nature of the channel, which, until on its approach to Garmouth, where the river becomes split up into several currents, is of the barest description, void of nutriment and shelter-places. The generality of the trout, in consequence, are not much longer than one’s finger. Lower down, where the Spey is broken up into sections, and islands have been formed, covered over with brushwood, the shelter and feeding-grounds improve; but the class of trout peopling the runs and side-stretches which there abound is not in keeping with the appearance of the place; nor did I find it an easy task to force my way through the tangled bushes, and over the uneven ground, strewn with drift-wood, which form part and pertinent of the north bank of the river.

At Garmouth, I certainly expected to fall in with a *schule* of finnocks, it being the time of the year when they are usually most plentiful, and the river being apparently in fine trim. I only succeeded, however, in capturing one, and that a sorry specimen of the fish above-named, which, along with a few common trout, formed the whole spoils of the day. Next morning the Spey was in full *spate*, torrents of rain having fallen during the night. It continued in a disturbed state up to the 14th of August, when

I left Fochabers. Before quitting, however, I paid a couple of visits to a small burn called the Tinet, four miles distant, the trout of which, on the average, were nearly herring-sized, and very abundant. On both occasions I filled a good-sized creel with them in the course of four or five hours. The sight of an angler, and the employment of fly and worm (I used both), were quite new to the farm-labourers resident within hail of its banks; *gumping*, or perhaps netting, being the only means they had been accustomed to adopt in securing, now and then, a dish of trout; but it was evident they had not been severe in their exactions upon the finny wealth of this little stream, which, by alterations in a mill-cauld not far from the sea, it struck me might easily be made accessible to finnocks and sea-trout.

It was a far-removed stretch of the Spey, and in character very different, that I fished over in 1835. I allude to the part of this river, not far from its source, which passes by the village of Laggan. I had walked over from Dalwhinnie, by Glen Truim, encountering on the way, on its crowning ridges, one of the most terrific thunderstorms I ever beheld; the sublimity of the scene, as I well recollect, being heightened by the transit, within gunshot, of an eagle in full scream. On reaching Laggan, in a highly drenched state, I applied for refreshment and sleeping accommodation at the only inn, so far as I could discover, belonging to the village. Instead of my application being, as usual, civilly responded to, it was met by a gruff negative, and a rude barring of the premises against my admission. I was not, however, being tired as well as wet, easily put off, but angrily demanded of one of the inmates, who appeared to be curiously observing me through the pane of a window, the reason of this unwonted reception. My interrogatory was replied to by a stare and a turn of the head, which latter movement I correctly construed into the holding of some communication with a third party. All at once the door of the inn was

thrown open, and the landlord, a manly-looking Speysider, invited me to enter, tendering at the same time many and fervent apologies for his singular conduct. The whole secret lay in this; that he was apprehensive of a visit from the excise-man, having just received a supply of ungauged whisky from some recess in the wilds of Badenoch, and being engaged at the same time in an experiment upon malt, the probable success of which I judged of, not greatly to its advantage, on partaking of the proceeds of a former browst. My sleeping apartment just having been made use of as the theatre of barley fermentation, it could hardly be expected that I should escape being subjected at night to a similar process. Before committing myself, however, to the influences which pervaded its atmosphere, I put the Spey under contribution, educing from its streams, which the recent thunder-shower had slightly discoloured, a very satisfactory dish of trout.

Next morning, on leaving the village of Laggan, I fished up the Spey towards its sources. I am induced to think, from what I recollect of it, that had I been provided with worm, and initiated, in these days, in the proper method of fishing with this lure, I could have taken, in a short space of time, as many trout as one would care to carry, under a broiling sun, such as I was favoured with on that occasion. As it was, I met with very indifferent success, and after persevering for two or three hours, took down my rod, and commenced the ascent of Corryarick, by the old military road leading to Fort Augustus; it being my intention to proceed along the banks of Loch Ness to Inverness, and thence to pass, by way of Kessock Ferry, into Ross-shire. As a carriage approach to the great Glen of Albyn, this road has been disused for a number of years. It was in a state of disrepair in 1835, and by this time probably a large portion of it has been converted into a series of water-courses, which the pedestrian will have some difficulty, even during summer, in picking his steps across.

Taken from the southern side, Corryarick presents a stiffish climb, and the road so called, with its everlasting zigzags or traverses, instead of facilitating one's approach to the summit, only adds to his fatigue, and excites the wish to quit its protection—an experiment which I would not recommend the hardiest pedestrian to venture on when the weather is at all doubtful, the hazards, in the shape of swamps and precipices, being numerous throughout the district.

Of the dreary nature of the Corryarick ascent, some conception may be formed from the circumstance, that in the whole line of march from Garviemore, on Speyside, to within two miles of Fort Augustus, there is not a dwelling of any kind to be met with. When I passed over it, the only human being that crossed my path was a goat-herd—a miserably-clad, wild-looking object, the expression of whose features was that of confirmed idiocy, blended to some extent with cunning. It was at a turn of the road close to the highest point of elevation that he presented himself, and it really seemed, so sudden was his appearance, and so singular his conduct and attire, that, like one of the Gnomes we read of in Swedish tale, he had started out of the bowels of the earth. All I could elicit from him, in reply to some interrogatory put by me, as to the distance from Fort Augustus, was an 'Ugh! ugh!' or Gaelic monosyllable corresponding to this Indian guttural, accompanied by violent gestures, not one of them a whit more intelligible.

I arrived at Fort Augustus an hour or two before sunset, and as well as I can recollect, for my journal fails to relate the circumstance, threw an unsuccessful line over the stream which connects Loch Ness with Loch Oich, usually called the Oich River. This link in the great chain is frequently made the halting-place of salmon in their way to the Garry. It contains two or three good rod-casts, but, like the Ness itself, is not to be relied on; and, since the opening of the Caledonian Canal, has

suffered, in common with the whole range of waters belonging to that district in communication with the Moray Firth.

I do not know how things are managed now, but there was certainly, at the period when I visited it, little encouragement for the angler to take up his quarters for any length of time at Fort Augustus. This was owing not so much to the unreasonable exclusiveness frequently maintained in the Highlands by the proprietors of fishings, but to the exorbitance of the charges which the traveller was subjected to, in exchange for indifferent cheer and shabby accommodation. Indeed, as to the exclusive principle, it was less acted on, in these days, in that locality, than in any other. Lochs Oich, Garry, Ness, and the smaller lakes in their vicinity, so far as trout-fishing was concerned, were certainly not interdicted to the angling public, and an occasional cast over the salmon-holds of the Lochy, Garry, and Moriston rivers, might have been obtained on mere and uncere- monious application. The system of overcharge, however, at the principal inns, was even then in operation, and evinced itself, as it appeared to me, in a very aggravated, not to say brutal form and measure, at Fort Augustus. For a miserable tea-dinner, in which ham and eggs took the leading part, a glass of toddy, the use of an uncarpeted apartment, termed a dormitory, the bed so called being devoid of linen or curtains, and, as the Yankee would term it, 'a starvation breakfast,' I was charged by a ruffianly landlord, whom there was no reasoning with, 14s. 6d.—a sum that, even at the West End of London, would have secured me, in the matter of these items alone, an approach to luxury. It is to be hoped that a moderate and equitable system of charge has been introduced into that quarter, and that the ample extent of angling ground there presenting itself, is not allowed to lie unused, simply from want of comfortable and fair-priced 'up-putting,' as we Scotsmen would term it.

From Fort Augustus I proceeded by way of Strath-Errick to the General's Hut, not far from the Fall of Foyers. The range of country through which I passed abounds in small lochs, all of which communicate more or less directly with Loch Ness, and contain yellow trout; some of them pike. The day being a Sunday I left them to their repose, which did not appear as if at any time it was much disturbed by the angler. My respects to the celebrated waterfall were paid in course of the same afternoon.

I may here remark that all sights and sounds in which water acts a leading part, exercise a special influence, quite distinct from what they maintain over the generality of view-hunters, on the mind of the angler; and although, as in the case of the Foyers Falls, there is nothing, properly speaking, pertinent to the sport, I defy him, with the roar and turmoil that greet his ear, with the flash, the spray-mist, and the rainbow, the seething caldron, the precipitous rock and its mossy vegetation—with the whole combination, in fact, of sounds and sights presented to him—not to associate thoughts of his favourite pastime. An angler thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his art, will connect its practice, in spite almost of reason, with much more improbable places than a Highland waterfall like that of Foyers; indeed, I have known among my friends more than one who could not look upon any accumulation of the watery element—a puddle, for instance, in the street of a town or city, occasioned by a defect in its drainage—without yielding himself up to the idea that it contained subjects of sport with the rod and line.

To my fondness of scenery, taken by itself, I fear I am too far implicated in the piscatorial mania to do proper justice; and I begin to doubt if, even as the spectator of such a cataract as Niagara, I could separate the loftier emotions of awe and wonder, with which naturally the mind becomes filled in its presence, from that exercise of the fancy which would convert the

vast discharge into a mere salmon-leap, and reduce the abyss below, with its untiring and insatiable eddies, to the level of a common fish-pond.

On Monday, 6th July, I repaired to the margins of Loch Ness, which are accessible a short way below the General's Hut, with the intention of taking a few casts here and there where sport seemed likely to be obtained, and proceeding in the course of the afternoon to Inverness. The loch, when I commenced, was under the influence of a good stiff breeze, which subsided gradually as the day advanced, until, when I left off fishing, it had arrived at a state of absolute calm. In mounting my tackle I was encouraged as much by the success as by the advice of a local angler, whom I came upon while in the act of landing a dun salmon, to use flies of a larger description than what are commonly employed by the trout-fisher. I find what was wont to be designated in Edinburgh the Maule pattern, after the late Mr. Maule, perhaps in his day and generation the most successful angler in Scotland, set down in my journal as one of the lures put to trial by me on that occasion. The wings of this old-fashioned killer are formed of mottled turkey or florican feather; the body of dark-blue mohair, ribbed with silver-twist, and wound over with a black-edged, brown hackle; the tail-tip of orange or brown-coloured wool, with a touch of speckled drake-feather superadded. It was a special favourite on the river Awe at one period, but has lost caste both there and elsewhere, like many of our old standard Scottish patterns, on account of its primitive appearance and the homeliness of the materials composing it. I have described it as a salmon-fly, but, judged of by its dimensions, the hook used by me was simply a large trouting one, or loch-hook, No. 8 Adlington. In combination with the Maule fly I employed the well-known magnet, the red Professor. With these hooks, on the range of lake lying betwixt Inver-Farikaig and the village of Dores, I did satisfactory execution, killing

several fine sea-trout, the largest about three pounds in weight, and upwards of a dozen loch-trout, the best four of which turned the scale at seven pounds.

The range fished by me is not by any means the most inviting in connexion with Loch Ness; on the contrary, a great deal of it has the appearance of being destitute of the advantages, in the shape of bays, capes, and feeders, possessed to a large extent by many other portions of its marginal line. Yellow trout frequently attain a great size in this, the most notable, as regards depth and length, if not area, of our Scottish lakes. When at Fort Augustus, I saw a specimen which had been taken by means of trolling-tackle from the boat, weighing fourteen pounds. Whether any claim has been set up in favour of such huge prowlers as belonging to the *ferox* species I do not know; indeed, the deeper I am led to inquire into the subject, the nearer I approach to a conviction that ichthyologists are on the wrong tack when they ascribe to the monster trout, which inhabit several of our most spacious lakes, a specific character. The stress laid upon dentition, the shape and relative proportions of the head, etc., induce me to question in some measure the propriety of the basis on which many of our most eminent naturalists found what they term a species in the family *Salmonidæ*. It may be bordering upon presumption in me to differ in opinion from such authorities as Yarrell, Couch, Selby, Wilson, Jardine, Knox, etc., but until the very singular transformations which the entire head, not to say body, of the kipper, or male salmon, undergoes in the course of the twelvemonth, are satisfactorily explained, I shall be inclined to hold the *ferox* in the light of an overgrown *fario*—our Tweed *ferox*, the swallow-smolt, as it is termed, finding its place also as such in the angler's catalogue.

Inverness has long enjoyed the repute of being the chief gathering place for sportsmen in the north of Scotland. Its name is associated with venison, grouse, ptarmigan, Alpine



hares, eagles, trout, char, and salmon. It would be difficult, indeed, to disabuse one of the idea that the Highland capital stands in the most intimate connexion with the haunts of these animals, and that its atmosphere is actually charged with a gamey fragrance. As a point of start and observation, or as a place of tryst, it offers, no doubt, many advantages to the sportsman, but it will not admit of being regarded in a more attractive light, or as forming the nucleus of a good sporting territory. The inducements which the angler, in particular, meets with to take up his quarters at Inverness, are very slight. A salmon river, it is true, of ample width, intersects the town, and leads to the impression that one has only to cross its surface with the approved tackle, in order to command, almost at any time, a merry run and active tussle with the king of fresh-water fishes. Quite a mistake! The Ness, with all its inviting features, its plenitude of discharge and transparent purity, undergoes an annual struggle to maintain even a second-place position among our salmon rivers. In what may be called the open portion of it, or that to which by payment of a fixed sum access can be obtained, the character of the sport met with is very unequal, and, taking it all in all, extremely discouraging. Prize days, it is true, occasionally occur, but they are met chiefly by some dogged and determined hand, who works the water perseveringly as well as scientifically, and whose aim apparently is to support, by every means in his power, the failing credit of the river. Even in its best days, when its fisheries drew a rental three times as large as they do at present, the Ness, it speaks for itself, could never have been a first-class angling river. Its character and action are too much those of a conduit to allow of the salmon taking up a fixed position in its pools during the open season. The great body of fish which had escaped the nets—there being no impediment in the shape of a fall or cruiwe-dyke to their further progress—would naturally push up and pass

into the Lake territory, thence to distribute themselves, according to their instincts, over the lateral feeders—the Urquhart, Moriston, and Garry rivers in particular.

## SONG.

## I.

WHEN homeward from the stream we turn,  
Good cheer our sport replaces ;  
There's liquor sparkling in the glass,  
There's joy on all our faces.

## II.

We drink sweet healths, a merry round,  
We talk old stories over,  
And emulate with snatch and glee  
The warblings of the cover.

## III.

Thus cheerily our evenings pass,  
Till, lull'd below the quilting,  
We sleep our toils off and are forth  
Before the lark is liting.

## IV.

All joy be with our heart's kin bold,  
May Care's nets ne'er entangle,  
Nor woe nor poverty depress  
A brother of the angle !

Reverting to my visit to Fochabers in 1861 : on leaving that village on the 14th August, I passed on by rail to Huntly—a town, it struck me, seldom rested in by birds of passage of any kind ; the waters surrounding which are next thing to intact,

that is to say, they have not been obtruded on greatly by skilful fly-fishers. Such was my experience, at any rate, in relation to the Deveron and Bogie. There were plenty anglers established in the district, but they were all, so far as I could ascertain, of the old school. The tackle and salmon-flies in vogue were also primitive in the extreme. In the getting up of these, the jailer of Huntly was looked upon as a crack hand; he was also the referee-general on all matters pertaining to fishing, and reckoned *piscator primus* on the streams round about. I purchased a few of his manipulations, but I fear, unless hard put to it, shall never take an opportunity of testing them. When at Huntly, by kind permission of her Grace the late Duchess of Gordon, I tried the policy waters for salmon. I also spent a day or two with my old friend Mr. Hay Gordon, at Mayen House, and fished the Avochy streams, superintending Rothiemay, which belong to him. The river, unfortunately, was quite out of order, being at least a foot higher than its usual level, and in the course of being subjected to a succession of freshets. I captured, however, with the salmon-fly, a very respectable dish of river-trout, and had an opportunity of judging of the capabilities of the Deveron as a trouting stream. Above Huntly, in the open, unrestricted water, I gave both it and the Bogie a special trial, devoting a couple of days to each; and as these were of the sunny order, I brought the worm, my favourite summer lure, into play. My largest trout taken in the Deveron, a short way above Huntly, weighed about two pounds, and presided 'over three dozens of others, most of them respectable in their dimensions, and all taken within the space of three hours. From the Bogie, in a curtailed forenoon's fishing, I extracted fifty-four trout, of which the toppers, eighteen in number, weighed, on the average, half-a-pound.

## PERTHSHIRE.

WITH the Tay and its tributaries, my acquaintance, as a trout-fisher, dates as far back as 1830. Kincarrathie House, on the north side of the river, close to Perth, was occupied by my father as a summer residence during a portion of that year, extending from the beginning of July to the end of September. Permission, on application, was freely accorded to the members of his family to angle from the policy grounds attached to Scone Palace, and higher up, over a considerable extent of water, containing at that period, I cannot say abundance, but a fair stock of fresh-water trout. Any success, however, I met with on the Tay itself, beyond the capture of small fry, was accomplished, on a happening flood, by means of the minnow, opposite Luncarty, and in the neighbourhood of the lade from which the Stormonthfield breeding-boxes and rearing-ponds are supplied.

Away from the main river, I extended my piscatorial wanderings along the courses of several of its feeders, among which may be named the Almond, the Ordie, the Shochie, and St. Martin's Burn. I also, on the same year, paid occasional visits to the Earn, and its tributary the May-water, unquestionably the best trouting-stream in the neighbourhood of the Fair City.

As far as the *fario* is concerned, the Tay near Perth is not a river possessed of very great attractions for the angler. The resident trout are not particularly numerous; indeed, in this respect they belie even the indications which ample shelter and an apparent sufficiency of food throughout the year present in their favour; nor is the size which they usually attain to anything singular, considering the bulk of the river itself. In both respects, the produce of Tay falls greatly short of that of Tweed. This inferiority can be more readily accounted for in relation to the upper parts of the river than to the stretch of water betwixt

Perth and Dunkeld, the feeding-grounds of which have a sustaining look about them, equal at least to that which Tweed presents below Wark or Coldstream. Above its junction with the Tummel, Tay to some extent loses this feature, and in many places discovers a shiftiness or compliancy of disposition in the material of its *alveus*, and in consequence a want of permanent and reliable feeding-ground, which are sufficiently explanatory of its defects as a trouting-river.

In this capacity I tested it, fairly and fully, for the space of eight or nine days, during the summer of 1853, in the neighbourhood of Aberfeldy, under what I am inclined to hold were the most favourable circumstances possible for ascertaining the capabilities, or rather the actual resources, of a river of considerable calibre. On the occasion I refer to, my intention to prosecute the nobler sport of salmon-fishing having, through the occurrence of calm, cloudless weather, been laid aside, I betook myself, along with my brother, Capt. S., R.N. (we were residing together close to the celebrated Falls of Moness), to trouting with the worm—a branch of the art piscatorial held in contempt, I am aware, by the highfliers, but which I shall always maintain, requires, in order to excel in it, greater address, and apter knowledge of the *habitat* of the trout, under certain conditions of river and atmosphere, than are called into play in mere surface-whipping. On Tweedside—and where can there be found a better arena either for action or judgment in fishing matters?—this has been proved and decided on over and over again.

Under the circumstances, however, I have referred to, the streams being in first-rate order, and the portion of them traversed embracing a considerable stretch of preserved water, the contents of our panniers (which, although they did not, taken separately, exceed on any one day twelve or fourteen pounds in weight, gave great surprise to several Aberfeldians) satisfied me

that, in point of abundance, as well as size, the trout of Tay will not bear comparison with those of Tweed. To account for this striking superiority which the Border river maintains over every other running water in Great Britain, one has only to consider the extent and quality of its breeding and rearing grounds, the beautiful adjustment of stream and pool preserved to it throughout its course, and the unfailing supply of food and shelter accorded by every part of its *alveus*.

A further drawback to the increase of trout in the Tay is the presence of pike in considerable numbers. The haunts of these fish are of course chiefly restricted to the very sluggish stretches of the river, and to its pertinents, in the shape of bye-water; but, even so limited, the damage accruing to the fry, both of trout and salmon, from this source of injury must be very extensive.

As to the habits of the *lucius*, one or two errors prevail. It is maintained, for instance, that, forming an attachment to this or that particular spot, the pike invariably lays itself under a kind of arrest, or honourable restraint, in regard to the sphere of its depredations. That on the discovery of very snug and delectable quarters, it will, like the spider, be content to do so, I am well aware; but I have come, from personal observation, to the conclusion that this hole-and-corner life is not in accordance with the usual habits of the fish, and that it is more inclined to act the rover, to shift its haunts, and occasionally to engage in a lengthened chase or foray. Instances of this propensity in the pike are occasionally met with in connexion with Tweed, during the descent of the smolts in April and May. Two or three very remarkable ones were communicated to me not many years ago by an eye-witness. At a distance of five or six miles from any *habitat* known as such of these fish, and at a central point on the netting stations, within tidal influence, several pike were taken on the trail of the salmon fry, by means of the usual weir-shot net. These, it is supposed, had followed the smolts, which

in their descent form into bands, out of the river Till; Teviot was also suggested; but Till, a pike-infested and more conveniently situated water, was the more probable stronghold from which they had sallied.

Reverting to the Tay, I repeat my conviction that enormous injury to the salmon and trout nurseries results from this source. On the occasion of any visit I have paid to it and its tributaries, the Earn and Tummel, I have always expressed my surprise that no measures should have been taken, on an extended scale, to thin and keep down these marauders, by thoroughly ransacking and destroying their notorious lurking-places, and by giving encouragement, as is done on some rivers, to rod-fishers to make war upon them in every direction. The reduction and shielding off of the bye-water, and the conversion, by embankments, of the sluggish reaches which prevail here and there along the course of the Tay and Earn, into swiftly gliding streams, would go a great way to effect this object.

### SONNET.

‘ANGLERS! ye are a heartless, bloody race;’  
’Tis thus the half-soul’d sentimentalist  
Presumes to apostrophize us to the face.  
Weak, paltry, miserable antagonist!  
To deem by this compassionate grimace  
He doth sweet service to humanity;  
And yet, when of his fellow’s misery—  
Of wars and pestilence, and the woes that chase  
Mankind to the interminable shore,  
He hears,—to treat them with a hasty sneer,  
Nor let their shrill appeal disturb a tear,  
Or one emotion waken in his core!  
It is too much! Anglers, your cruelty  
Is tenderer than this man’s philanthropy!

Among my visits to the Tay, I must not forget to mention one paid by me, in July 1854, to the Stormonthfield breeding-grounds, in company with Mr. Robert Buist, late superintendent of the river, and other gentlemen belonging to the committee of management. I need scarcely say that I was much gratified by what was pointed out to me on that occasion; and although I cannot subscribe to the notion entertained, that a great and remunerative increase in the yield of the river has accrued, or is ever likely to accrue, from this source of supply, without the scale on which the experiments are conducted being greatly enlarged, I am fully sensible of the advantages which have already resulted from the carrying on of these experiments. This, at least, is plain, that the greater the light thrown upon the natural history of the salmon, the more accordant with what is required will be the means taken, legislatively or otherwise, to uphold and enlarge its stock of supply. The Tay proprietors, if by their investigations they add but one solitary fact to what is already known as regards the monarch of our rivers, will assist to do themselves, as well as others, an enduring service. This consideration alone appears to me sufficient in order to prompt the carrying on of their practical inquiries, apart from any proof deemed to have been obtained by a few sanguine upholders of the scheme, as to the decided increase of Tay produce through means of the Stormonthfield nurseries.

## THE TAKING OF THE SALMON.

### I.

A BIRR ! a whirr ! a salmon's on,  
A goodly fish, a thumper !  
Bring up, bring up the ready gaff,  
And when we land him we shall quaff  
Another glorious bumper !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The previous fortifying of the angler and fisherman accompanying him, with a dram, is here taken for granted.



Hark ! 'tis the music of the reel,  
The strong, the quick, the steady :  
The line darts from the circling wheel,  
Have all things right and ready.

## II.

A birr ! a whirr ! the salmon's out  
Far on the rushing river,  
He storms the stream with edge of might,  
And like a brandish'd sword of light,  
Rolls flashing o'er the surges white,  
A desperate endeavour !  
Hark to the music of the reel !  
The fitful and the grating ;  
It pants along the breathless wheel,  
Now hurried, now abating.

## III.

A birr ! a whirr ! the salmon's off !  
No, no, we still have got him ;  
The wily fish has sullen grown,  
And, like a bright embedded stone,  
Lies gleaming at the bottom.  
Hark to the music of the reel !  
'Tis hush'd, it hath forsaken ;  
With care we'll guard the slumbering wheel  
Until its notes awaken.

## IV.

A birr ! a whirr ! the salmon's up !  
Give line, give line and measure ;  
And now he turns, keep down a-head  
And lead him as a child is led,  
And land him at your leisure.

Hark to the music of the reel !  
'Tis welcome, it is glorious ;  
It wanders round the exultant wheel,  
Returning and victorious.

## v.

A birr ! a whirr ! the salmon's in,  
Upon the bank extended ;  
The princely fish lies gasping slow,  
His brilliant colours come and go,  
Silver alternating with snow,  
All beautifully blended.  
Hark to the music of the reel !  
It murmurs and it closes ;  
Silence falls on the conquering wheel,  
The wearied line reposes.

## vi.

No birr ! no whirr ! the salmon's ours :  
The noble fish, the thumper !  
Strike through his gill the ready gaff,  
And bending homewards we shall quaff  
The overflowing bumper !  
Hark to the music of the reel !  
We listen with devotion ;  
There's something in that circling wheel  
That stirs the heart's emotion !

I am led by my recollections of Perthshire, and the sport obtained on its rivers, to Crieff, a village it used to be called, it is now a town, which for salubrity, leaving for the moment its other attractions undwelt on, is surpassed by none other in broad Scotland. Connected with this special feature may be mentioned

the longevity of its inhabitants. The characteristic in question, I presume, still belongs to it. In my own recollection, in 1833, there were, out of a population of about 4000 individuals, at least five centenarians, three of whom, lusty in limb and sound in wind, formed the vanguard to a corps of indigence which paraded the streets and suburbs in quest of the weekly largess, in shape of broken food and bawbees, which it was customary at that period for the better class of inhabitants to dole out on Saturday afternoons.

The scenery round about Crieff has never, in proportion to its merits, been done justice to. It is chiefly of that mixed class which finds favour with poets and artists—the sublime subdued by the beautiful. In the upper part of the valley of the Earn, from Lochearnhead in fact, passing the villages of St. Fillans and Comrie, all the way down to Crieff, nothing can exceed the loveliness, blended with grandeur, which characterizes the landscape. Every deflection in the lake, every elbow of the river, presents to the eye a fresh feast, and exercises its own witching power over the fancy. A hundred traditions are mixed up with the scenic attractions of old Strathearn, in which the Druids and the Culdees, and the Caledonian King Galgacus, and the Romans, and the Clan Grigor, and the Ghouls subterranean of wooded Lednock, and the little green manikins that play at bo-peep by moonlight on the birken knolls of Dunira, flourish indiscriminately. To me these things—the landscape, the lore, and the legend—make angling all the pleasanter, and so they do with every one I would care to meet, rod in hand, by the river-side. There are some touching lyrics also that owe their life to this, the fairest of Highland straths. ‘Glen Turret Glen,’ beginning ‘Blythe was she,’ by Burns, was one of them; but what stream in Scotland has not invited to some well-known effusion of bard or ballad-maker?

As a trouting river the Earn has perhaps been rated beyond

its deservings. The lowest stretch of it, extending from Gask downwards, is almost useless for rod-fishing; nor in the choicest parts of its course are the fresh-water trout either large or numerous, at least they were not so in 1842, or in previous years, as far back as 1833. In 1861, when I last visited them, the season being advanced, I restricted myself to salmon-fishing, and meeting with some encouragement, did not trouble the haunts of the *fario*, so had no opportunity of forming an opinion respecting them.

The Earn in July is freely entered by the *Salmo albus*, or whitling. Half-a-dozen of these fishes, however, averaging from 1 lb. to 3 lbs., are considered an excellent day's take in its casts. On some of our northern rivers it would be looked upon as a very indifferent one. I never, it appears from my journal, got up to that mark in the immediate neighbourhood of Crieff; for although I have spent several months on the banks of the Earn, and was always on the look-out for a favourable opportunity, it was at no time my good fortune to find the river in first-rate trim for whitling fishing. A brace or two of these silvery boys, however, I added now and then to the contents of my creel, and felt as much satisfaction in securing them, under the disadvantages just mentioned, as I have since felt, *fortuna favente*, in the capture of a couple of stone of sea-trout.

## THE ANGLER'S DELIGHTS.

### I.

OH! who that feels the joyous throb which the angler's bosom  
stirreth,

To the flowery stream-side hieing,

When vernal winds are flying,

Would envy all that fortune with her fickle hand confer-  
reth?

## II.

Nor in cities, nor with courtiers, nor within the kingly palace,  
    So flowing in its measure  
    Is the rife cup of our pleasure,  
As when with wand and pannier we tread the daisied valleys.

## III.

Would we give the grey lark's carol for the cold lip-utter'd  
    chorus,  
    Or heaven's ample covering,  
    Where the minstrel bird is hovering,  
For the lamp-lit roofs that elevate their stately arches o'er us?

## IV.

Would we give our wild, free rambles, for the reveller's heated  
    prison?  
    Or with the false and fawning,  
    Consume a summer's dawning,  
Rather than greet the joyful sun from his couch of clouds arisen?

## V.

Would we give our water-sceptre for the staves of state and  
    splendour?  
    Or exchange the angler's calling  
    On the shady river trolling,  
For all the lesser pleasancess that pomp or power can tender?

## VI.

Though bewitching are the hues that wrap the world's every folly,  
    No longer they invite us,  
    While truer joys delight us  
By the stream-side as we roam, below the hawthorn and the  
    holly.

A well-known resort of the sea-trout which enter the Earn is Glen Artney, a secluded mountain-pass, forming part of the deer-forest on the Perth estate belonging to Lord Willoughby d'Eresby. It is traversed by the Ruchil, a stream on its approach towards Comrie of rugged speed ; indeed, in the lower portion, owing to this circumstance, and the precipitous nature of the banks, which are covered with wood to the water's edge, it is quite impracticable to bring the rod into play. The best fishing-range commences five or six miles from the mouth, and extends upwards into the heart of the glen ; there the casts are readily commanded, and free from brushwood. To this point, in the event of a summer flood, the sea-trout leaving the Firth of Tay below Newburgh have been known to climb in the course of ten or twelve hours. The distance, including the windings of the rivers, cannot be short of eighty miles. I fished the Ruchil for the first time, on the occasion of a freshet, in July 1833, but the knowing harry-waters of the district had got the start of me, and were actually on their way homewards, with their panniers cramful of newly-run sea-trout, before I came in sight, after a tedious pull, of the favourite ground. The water had relapsed into its ordinary dimensions, and I met in consequence with poor sport among the whitling tribe, making up, however, for my disappointment by filling my creel with burn-trout ; but I took care, on after opportunities, to be beforehand with the natives, and succeeded, everything considered, in securing a fair proportion of the sport then met with on the Ruchil.

In August 1842, while residing at Comrie House, I renewed my acquaintance with this romantic stream, with results which induce me to look favourably upon it as a haunt for the whitling, or Tay sea-trout. It may seem curious, as a fact connected with the natural history of this fish, that the sea-trout entering the river Earn, after pursuing its course as far as the mouth of the Ruchil, almost invariably turn aside from the more natural

and straightforward course which leads up into the main strath, and take to the tributary. This is in accordance, however, in some measure, with their habits on other rivers as well as the Earn. On Tweed, for instance, the early sea-trout, which comprehend what are left of that greatly-reduced species the whitling, show a marked preference for the Whitadder and Till, the latter especially; while the late ones, those which press into the river by thousands in October and November, evince the same disposition in choosing their breeding-grounds, often forsaking the direct current for a water much inferior in size that meets it at right angles—a water, too, which apparently possesses no advantage over the other.

I have noticed that the instinct of these fish leads them away from the arable into the untilled districts. The Kale, on Teviot, affords an illustration in point, so do the heights of the Whitadder and those of Till, in its connexion with the Bowmont. The means which I understand have been taken of recent years by the salmon proprietors of the Tay to give free admission to fish of the salmon kind to the Glen-Almond breeding-grounds, not far from Perth, lead to the impression that this instinct has to a certain extent become recognised.

While at Crieff, in 1833, I now and then sauntered up Glen Turret to the loch, four or five miles distant, from which the water of Turret, a mountain-stream, stocked indifferently, in the rapid portions of its course, with small trout, takes its rise. The angling with the rod on Loch Turret was, at the time I speak of, held exempt from challenge; and of this liberality on the part of the proprietor, Sir W. K. Murray of Ochtertyre, I took occasional advantage. It is not a piece of water resembling some of our Highland lakes, in which one is sure, provided he is up to the mark as an angler, of meeting with success. On the contrary, its trout are of a sulky disposition, and not inclined, simply because the air has a balmy feeling, and the surface of the lake

is invitingly ruffled, to show face to the artificial fly. I was, however, on three or four occasions, fortunate enough to find them in high taking humour. The most remarkable of these stands recorded in my diary, under date of June 20th. Trudging up towards the loch early in the morning, I overtook a middle-aged gentleman of stoutish build, half-clerically and half-piscatorially rigged out, with whom I entered into conversation about trout-ing and the prospects of the day. He was quite an enthusiast on the subject, but leant to the worm rather than the fly, and was on his way to test the efficacy of that lure among the feeders of Loch Turret and Cuan. To attempt discouraging him I saw at once was useless, as he had made up his mind to the work, so, on arriving together at the lower end of the lake, I commenced operations. In the course of two or three hours we again met, as if by appointment, at the exact spot where we had separated. The trout had just given over feeding, and I was in the act of counting out my spoils on the heathery slope, when my companion of the morning made his reappearance. He had never seen, he admitted, such an array of beautiful trout in his lifetime. They exceeded by a trifle six dozen in number. Of these, about a score stood severally from a pound well on to a pound and a half in weight, the rest averaging nearly half-a-pound apiece. The fine condition and superb colouring of these fish drew expressions of warm admiration from my new friend, who introduced himself on the spur of the moment as Professor Gillespie of St. Andrews, the author, among other literary effusions, of some observations, published in one of the early numbers of *Blackwood's Magazine* (1819, pp. 585), on bait-fishing, along with a humorous account of a day's excursion up Glenwhargan in Dumfriesshire, his native county. These observations, although applied to worm-fishing, contain the cream and marrow of Stewart's advices to the fly-fisher. They are very valuable in their relation to small burn tenanted by petty trout, but are scarcely worth a straw



when brought to bear upon rivers, properly so called, where the bank shelter is amissing, and where a short one-handed rod would be found powerless either to propel the worm forward to the required distance, or to act as a lever in recovering it, or in striking the fish. Professor Gillespie, on the occasion of his visit to the feeders of Loch Turret, was not fortunate; but he over-rated their capabilities, and expected too much from them as the nurseries of a well-reputed lake.

I never again, although in the course of our walk back to Crieff we mutually anticipated and planned several fishing excursions together, had the pleasure of conversing face to face with the Professor, a domestic affliction having called him away suddenly to St. Andrews next morning; but our accidental meeting on the shoulder of Ben Chonzie led to correspondence betwixt us on angling matters, which was kept up for several years, in fact until the date of his decease. My journal recounts other successes met with on this truly Highland loch. The 24th and 27th of June are so marked, also the 3d and 20th of July, and the 5th of August. The last date carries with it the recollection of a day's sport not much inferior to that above narrated.

I sometimes, during the summer of 1833, and again in 1839, proved the stilly parts of the Earn, and of a sluggish water called the Pow Burn, which forms one of its feeders, for pike. The Earn pike are better conditioned, and attain a larger size, than those of the Tay. They are also more capricious. Sultry weather foreboding thunder-storms, the most discouraging for trout-fishing, I have always found the most appetizing for pike, especially when accompanied with a light wind. With such experiences what took place on the Earn was at one; but there are occasions, in the breeding-season for instance, when the state of the atmosphere does not appear to affect them, and they will rush at any reasonable bait that you may choose to offer.

From Crieff I once or twice made an excursion to Glen-

Almond, and thence to Loch Freuchie, and when residing at Comrie House spent a day or two in exercise with my rod on Loch Earn, near St. Fillans. The upper ranges of Loch Earn I previously had laid under contribution in 1831. With Loch Freuchie, which is held in such high esteem by some of my angling friends, I was disappointed. It may, however, have greatly improved with respect to the size of its trout since that time, the netting, which was then regularly carried on, being now either done away with, or put under restrictions. The Loch Earn trout, also, such as are to be taken near the margins in summer, disappointed me in regard to their dimensions. Large fellows are now and then secured by the troller, but to bring such up to the scratch requires more perseverance than the sport they afford when hooked is really worth. There is some fine-looking preserved water, in the shape both of natural and artificial lakes or ponds, near Crieff, on the estates of Drummond Castle, Ochertyre, and Abercairney, which I never had the opportunity of throwing a line over.

The name of Abercairney leads me back to the incidents of a day passed with the then chieftain, the late James Moray, Esq., lineal representative of the Earls of Strathearn, at one of his shooting-lodges, located on the heights betwixt Monzie and Glen-Almond. Abercairney was a Celt to the back-bone, and rarely, if ever, hunting days excepted, exchanged the kilt for the trews. In his younger days he had journeyed on foot all over Italy, and penetrated into the wildest recesses of Calabria, under protection of his motley garb and a set of bagpipes, gaining the hearts and hospitalities of the brigand peasantry through the medium of strathspeys and pibrochs. With all his peculiarities and Highland prejudices, the chief, for he acknowledged no surname, and to be addressed as Mr. Moray brought the fire to his eye and the taunt to his tongue, was a man of highly cultivated tastes. As a connoisseur in fine-art productions, he was looked up to with

respect, and his collection of ancient marbles and objects of vertu formed one of the principal attractions of Abercairney House.

One of the incidents connected with the day in question relates to his high character as a sportsman, not in the capacity merely of Master of Hounds, in which position he was well known and appreciated in the lye of country stretching betwixt the Ochils and the Grampians, but also as an unerring shot, and justice-doer to that persecuted bird whose proper treatment gives almost arable value to the dreariest moorland—the grouse. It happened, if I recollect aright, betwixt the 12th and 20th of August. Abercairney's neighbour, the Laird of M——e, had just started on his career of notoriety as a grouse-killer, and his achievements on the heather, publicly bruited abroad, were, of course, liable to be made subjects of talk at table and elsewhere. I forget the exact tally of birds reported to have been knocked over by M——e on the occasion, but I well remember how it contrasted with the day's performance of my entertainer, whose moors, in contiguity with the M——e grounds, fully as well stocked, and of much greater extent, gave him the opportunity, had he chosen to avail himself of it, of silencing for ever the vaunts of a juvenile candidate for the honours acquired by handling a Manton with effect. The packs, I may mention, in that year, were rather backward in growth. In reality, they were not more so than what (by the false assumption proceeded on in the Game Laws, viz., that the young broods are fit subjects for bagging on the 12th of August) they usually turn out to be. Poults were particularly numerous, and it was in dealing with these soft-feathered fledglings, which a mere puff of powder was sufficient to singe into insignificance, that M——e evidently at that time looked for laurels as a crack shot. The pony, the flag-staff, the ready loaded barrel, brought to bear, along with other auxiliaries, there is no merit that I can see, or satisfaction either, beyond

what may be derived from dropping branchers in a rookery, in blazing away pell-mell at young grouse, merely to make up a monstrous bag, which shall read bravely in a newspaper paragraph, but the outs and ins of whose contents are kept a profound mystery.

Whilst the Laird of M——e's gun spoke to a hundred brace, less or more, that of Abercairney, on the occasion I refer to, gave evidence of the skill as well as the judgment with which it had been levelled, in the shape of eighteen old male grouse, the pick of as many packs. This contrast, in the way of dealing with birds, speaks for itself, and is introduced by me in order to illustrate the notions of what constitutes sport. That the wholesale butchery system should be so generally acted upon, and, the scarcity of grouse notwithstanding, frequently made a subject of surprise and complaint by the terrorists themselves, indicates an obtuseness of comprehension, or a want of common sense, in complete keeping with their treatment of the grouse stock.

The entertainment at Abercairney's shooting-lodge was a rich treat, in its own way, to a youth and a Sassenach, for although born in Midlothian I am bound to consider myself one of the alien race; nay, to have been born, and bred to boot, at John o' Groat's, a place which our countrymen (I speak in the large sense of the word) are in general under the firm conviction, simply because it lies in the extreme north of Scotland, forms part of the Highlands, would not have made kith or kin of me in the eyes of a genuine Celt.

At dinner, the ceremony of saying grace was finished off, if not wholly conducted, by the chieftain's own piper, who strutted up and down the narrow space assigned to him with an air of dignity assimilated to that of the moor-cock itself, when in full courting plumage. A cover removed, and grouse soup, with other preliminaries, discussed, in marched the kilted retainer a second time, venting from his inflated instrument a succession of

groans and skirls, of ear-torturing and brain-confusing sounds, which, had my attention not been drawn to the effect they had upon the chieftain himself, would have led me to judge of Highland music as an outrage upon taste and common sense. There is something, certainly, which it is not easy to account for, in the accommodation given by the ear, when brought into contact with them, to the tones of the bagpipe. I can understand how in the distance they exercise a fascinating influence over the Highlander, and where the connexion holds good betwixt Gaelic music and the voices which pervade the glens and mountains—the wail of the blast, the rush and roar of the waterfall, the thunder echo, the plaintive cry of the curlew, the scream of the eagle, the bellowing of the stag, and the many sounds familiar to the ear in the land of flood and heath. I can appreciate its power in the battle-field as an animating medium, and can recognise something even of a martial spirit in its shrill and discordant strains; but how, when pent up within the walls of a small apartment, it should not only become tolerated, but made use of as a source of stirring pleasure, is past comprehension.

The rapt regard accorded by Abercainey and his friends to this portion of the evening's repast, coincided with the effect I have often seen produced by the power of the Gaelic language from the pulpit. Great force of expression, exercising a strong sway over the feelings, and many happy renderings of thought and idea, pervade what we Sassenachs are apt to think a string of uncouth and semi-nasal sounds. The effects wrought on the audience by the Highland preacher are truly in their way miraculous. I have witnessed, on the occasion of a popular minister officiating at a sacrament, such a gathering of the clans as might lead one, were it not for the predominating presence of the gentler sex, to suppose that the war-slogan had been sounded, and the beacon-fires lighted up. Not from this glen or that alone, or even from the great Strath itself, had the

assemblage poured. Old men in the trews and plaid, lads in the philibeg, grey crones and withered calliagh, the kerchiefed dame, and the lass whose golden locks no coif or ribbon imprisoned, had crossed, bare-footed not a few of them, half the breadth of the island, over mountains rugged and trackless, along precipitous sears, by the banks of foaming torrents, through weary heaths and swamps curtained with mist—all led by that spirit which the fame of eloquence invokes. I have seen this motley congregation seated on the sward below the preacher, distributed in picturesque groups along one side of the grassy knoll which he occupied, every eye fixed, every ear at stretch, every heart held open to receive. You could have heard, in the silence of an occasional pause, the grasshopper's chirp or the wild-bee's hum, even the cropping of the daisied turf by a shaggy pony, whose affection for its owner had guided it towards the sacred precincts; and when the service was over, little skill did it require to read in the countenance of every retiring listener the shining triumphs of the gospel orator—the signet-stamp of his Angel of Persuasion.

The same master-spell which works in the speech appears to work also in the music of the Gael. On this occasion ample evidence was given of its strange control; for, as fate would have it, the spirit being raised, and the presence in an adjoining apartment of a couple of rival pipers having been announced, my frail ear was subjected, for the space of at least four mortal hours, to a course of laments and pibrochs, which the circulation of potent punch, ladled out by the host with severe exactness from the hollow of a bowl at least two feet in circumference, and of corresponding altitude, only rendered the more excruciating. Such an afternoon of musical agony I have never since endured; and although it has been my lot to encounter many a wet and gusty night, I have always managed to steer pretty clear of kilted lairds given to connect their unhallowed orgies, in

the shape of bagpipe discord, with the honourable mystery of punch-brewing—a mystery which, in the Borderland, is associated with mirth and melody of a much more intelligible cast. The upshot of the chieftain's ploy—piper's fame having lugged lots of volunteers in its wake to the retainer's quarters—was an adjournment thereto, followed by 'dirling of roof and rafter,' the active blending of kilt and kirtle, the snapping of thumbs, and that union of howling uproar, with frantic gesticulation, which forms the soul and spirit of the Highland dance. Under cover of such din and devilry I was glad to effect an escape, and at the risk of being swamped in a neighbouring morass, find my way to Crieff.

In the course of a pedestrian tour which I took in 1831, after fishing the Eden, near Falkland, in Fifeshire, I proceeded to Perth, and from thence, along with a friend, made excursions among the Ochils, our principal attention being directed to the May Water and the feeders of the Devon in Clackmannanshire. On the 16th of July I quitted the Fair City, and made my way up the Tay to where it becomes joined by its tributary the Tummel, and arriving at Moulinearn in the course of the afternoon, I found excellent quarters at the inn, then kept by Mr. Dewar and his right-hand man Sandy, as courteous and obliging host and servitor as one could wish to fall in with.

The next day being Sunday, I devoted a portion of it to a ramble up the rivulet which issues from Loch Broom, a highly reputed and strictly preserved trouting lake, lying in the midst of a fine grouse district, about five miles from the village. A peep at the water was all I had then the opportunity of enjoying. By kind permission, however, of his Grace the late Duke of Athol, I formed one of an angling party which met there on the 22d of July 1854, and, taking everything into account, the sport obtained accorded with what I had been led to expect. An incident connected with it may help to show the folly occasionally

exhibited by the best of anglers, of giving way, in a matter of judgment, to local prejudices and conceits regarding flies. My casting-line had been made up, and such fly-hooks as it struck me were very likely to suit the day and complexion of the water attached. One of these happening to catch the eye of an Atholman, an *employé* of his Grace, I forget in what capacity, whose piscatorial knowledge of the loch and its finny inhabitants was reckoned tip-top, he expressed, in decided terms, his disapproval of it, both as to colour and size, recommending very civilly a trial of his own fail-me-never patterns. The flies he provided were not new to me; indeed, I had recommended them over and over again as redoubted killers on Highland lochs in general; but I saw no reason why I should be guided on this occasion, even by my own recommendations, linked with the fact that they had been acted upon and received the credit they were entitled to in other quarters. I therefore declined his offer; nay, I did more, I re-arranged my fly-cast by substituting for the dropper a duplicate of the denounced fabrication; and as we had two boats at command, and stout gillies to manage them, I suggested that the flies locally approved of should be used in the hands of the party upholding them, against those of my selection. This suggestion having been acted on, the results, to the general surprise, seeing that my rival was no novice in the art of fly-throwing, and that we stood on a par in other respects, were, after three or four hours' fishing, very decidedly in my favour. In fact, against seventeen trout, varying in weight from a pound and a half to half a pound, which formed the sum-total of my spoils, only one was produced, and that a puny starveling, which had risen at a venture in the wake of the boat, after the expiry of feeding-time.

The secret of my comparative success lay, I am convinced, in adapting the colours of my selection to those which prevailed in the sky and affected the ruffled surface of the lake. Had I been



guided by the advice tendered me, I should, in all probability, have had a hard struggle to maintain my credit. The successful fly, I may mention, is classed on Tweedside among the March-browns, and stands at the head of its three varieties: wings, speckled partridge-feather or hen-pheasant: shoulders, ginger heckle; body, light-coloured hare-lug, with a slender gold thread worked over it, and tail-feelers attached.

My youngest brother, a crack hand with both rod and gun, who had slain salmon and *eriuces* among the heights of the Sacramento, river-cod in the Australian water-holes, pigs and monster eels among the tabooed hills of the Canterbury Settlement in New Zealand, as well as mokas and other fish in the estuaries of its rivers, angled in Loch Broom along with me on this occasion, using a similar fly. He preferred, however, beating the water from the margins instead of the boat; and in point of weight over-topped me by a pound or two, our numbers exactly corresponding. The loch had been recently dammed up and extended, both for sporting purposes, and in order to give water-power to a saw-mill near Moulinearn. He had in consequence to contend with the heather which lined its altered margins, and lost many a good trout in his endeavour to land it, owing to the disengaged fly coming into contact with the submerged twigs.

The trout of Loch Broom cut red and firm, and in point of symmetry and external beauty take the precedence of all the trout in the district. I am reminded of them in these respects by an admirably executed engraving, in water-colours, published by E. Gambart and Co., Berners Street, Oxford Street, entitled 'Not Long Caught.'

On that stretch of the river Tummel, the best trouting, and I may add salmon-fishing, is to be met with in the immediate neighbourhood of Moulinearn. Above Pitlochrie the bed is too rocky, and the run of water too impetuous to supply nourishment and eligible shelter to large trout. Although, to the half-

practised eye, these present the appearance of constituting excellent salmon accommodation, such in reality is not the case. It is quite an error to suppose that rocky bottoms are furnished with all the conveniences sought for by the salmon which frequent our rivers, or that these fish will select their point of out-look in our fresh waters solely upon the conditions implied in a rugged or indurated channel. There is no doubt that, in their choice of quarters, they incline to ledges of rock or large stones, but invariably these will be found, when the salmon are settled down, to lie in conjunction with, or in the vicinity of, a firm, gravelly *alveus*. I could enumerate many places where the instinct guiding them to this selection finds illustration, but shall content myself with particularizing one, taken from the district entered upon. At the distance from Pitlochrie of a couple of miles, the Tummel is joined by the Garry, the course of which river, from Faskally upwards through the Pass of Killierankie, is wildly rapid, and its bed strewn over with rocks and boulders of every shape and dimension ; nevertheless, even in the most impetuous positions, the eye of one not fully versed in all the outs and ins of salmon-fishing, proficient as he may be in the use of the rod, becomes so deceived as to construe the interspersed breaks and shallows, the flush of water passing from the tired eddies, the jutting shelves which gleam underneath—the whole build, in fact, of the channel,—into a series of admirable resting-places for the fish. I have no doubt that, under this impression, the stretch of river I allude to has been traversed with the artificial fly over and over again, and that wonder has been expressed, largely and loudly, at the obstinacy of the salmon in resisting every temptation which feather, wool, and tinsel could be combined into by the manipulating powers of such practised artists as Roderick Anderson or James Wright. But the truth simply is, that in resting humour no fish are ever there. Such are not the spots which the instincts of the salmon induce them to halt at and show appetite. Proceed

farther up. Climb from its torrent termination to the head of the Pass, to that point in the course of the Garry where the distribution of the rock becomes consorted equally with stretches of alluvial deposit, in fact, with spawning-ground; and in the pools favoured by such a combination you will find that not only are salmon to be met with, but that they are to be met with in a position which prompts and enables them to come readily towards the offered lure of the angler.

All who have had experience of our best salmon-rivers must have noted, that where the bed of the river is naked rock, or where the above combination does not hold good, sport either fails altogether, or is of a very inferior description. These observations bear upon the condition of Tummel as an angling stream, and upon the very deceptive appearance which the rocky part of its course presents. To the celebrated falls in this water I gave in 1854 particular attention. They are neither so high nor so abrupt as to prove, strictly speaking, an insurmountable barrier to the progress of salmon. Active fish occasionally work their way up them. I say 'work their way;' for it is chiefly by a continued process of exertion rather than by any one concentrated effort, such as a leap or spring, that they are enabled to overcome the opposition, which at the spot I refer to is given by the confined and furious discharge. Such fish, however, are not those which it is most desirable to direct into that splendid range of breeding-ground which lies higher up. It is to the progress of salmon and grilises, when in an advanced condition, that these falls present a formidable obstacle. As to the difficulty which fish when in this state have in overcoming a very slight measure of resistance, I can speak from personal observation. At a cauld-dyke built across the Tweed in Kelso, it is no unusual thing to see in the course of half an hour, during the height of the spawning season, a score of fish thrown back, in their attempts to establish themselves higher up, by the force of water, which passes over a

gradual slope of seven or eight feet in height. The depth, I allow, of the descending medium at the places selected by the fish on these occasions is not great, but it is quite sufficient to admit of the free action of the caudal, pectoral, and ventral fins, and is more suited than that of the main run for the passage of breeders; indeed, they invariably decline making use of the latter as impracticable, on account of its velocity. In regard to the Tummel falls, I see nothing to prevent them from being so treated as to be made capable of affording an easy passage to salmon in all their stages. Taking into account the compensation implied, for it really is so, in the opening up of an inviting approach to the spawning-grounds of the upper Tummel, and to those connected with Lochs Rannoch, Ericht, and Lydoch, viz., the Erocht and Gawin rivers, the expenditure of a few hundreds is neither here nor there. As for any injury threatening the scenic attractions of the falls, that, by a little exercise of taste, could readily be obviated. The development of such resources as those I have named is surely worth the consideration of the Tay Commissioners.

During my sojourn at Pitlochrie in 1854, I was induced, by some traditionary reports afloat in the village atmosphere, and given credit to, after a manner, by the primitives who circulated them, as to the wonderful contents of an old marl-pit, situated on the hill which leads up towards Moulin. Such-and-such a tried hand had put signature to the belief that it contained trout of unconquerable strength and enormous size. An encounter with one of these monsters was invariably followed by the loss of tackle, no matter its strength. On this account, and owing to the reputed shyness of the fish, which, it was further stated, could only be tempted to rise in the spring months, before the reeds and other water plants had gained ascendancy, the place was scarcely ever disturbed by the rod-fisher.

With water-hollows of this description, haunted by mysterious trout, I have in my time formed a large acquaintance. There are lots of them still to be met in the Lowlands of Scotland, but there were more, a great many, when draining operations were conducted on an inferior scale, and agricultural economy was less studied than at present. One of them, the Linton Loch, in Roxburghshire, as regards its revelations on being flushed dry and thoroughly ransacked, might have furnished a large museum with prominent objects of natural history. This water-hollow formed the nucleus of a swamp lying in the vicinity of the Hownam Hills, and appears to have been a place of fatal refuge to the persecuted quarry of an age venatorial, far beyond that when Scot and Southern held their contentions. There, deeply embedded in marl, were found the remains of various animals, not generally supposed to have been natives of Great Britain. Immense horns, among others those of the reindeer, the skull of a beaver, and bones of huge size, were taken out from a depth of many feet. Above these, in connexion with the moss, lay vast accumulations of hazel-nuts, and the remains of the trees from which they had dropped. Up to a late period, trout of large dimensions were said to occupy the reduced hollows of this morass. A friend of mine managed to pick out three or four, averaging from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 lbs., but these were the pigmies of the place; the leviathans always managed to escape, and were left to digest at leisure the cold iron they had so unceremoniously carried off.

My mode of dealing with haunts of this sort, such as in summer become clogged with aquatic plants, and are seldom, where free from such obstructions, acted on by the breeze, is very simple. I use the casting-line which I would employ in angling with the worm in clear water on Tweed, made up of seven or eight lengths of fine round silk-worm gut, carefully double-knotted, but not whipped over at the joinings. My hook, an Adlington round-

bend No. 9, I bait with a small well-cleaned red worm. A lead is not required, but a float will be found useful. A slip, about the size of a gun-wad, taken from a common bottle-cork, is what I generally make use of for this purpose. This I cut half-way across and connect with my casting-line, at a distance from the hook usually of about three feet, but varied by circumstances, such as the depth of the hole, temperature of the day, etc. The most suitable rod is one which commands a good stretch of water, and is at the same time both light and stiffish. With such a weapon, rigged out as described, I cautiously approach the pond or lakelet reported to contain the finny veterans, and drop my worm noiselessly near this or that tuft of reeds or floating plants, among the roots of which it strikes me a large trout may have ensconced itself. After allowing the worm to rest a minute or two (in river dibbling without a float, a single second will suffice to test the humour of the fish), no telegram from below having been received, I warily shift ground, and should a surface-feeding trout catch my eye, remove the slip of cork, and gently pitch out the bait towards it. Following this practice I took three trout one forenoon from the bog or marl-pit above Pitlochrie. Of these, the heaviest was a two-pounder, the others scarcely a pound each. I felt, however, no great disappointment on the score of their size, and in other respects they exceeded my expectations. It required some little management to exhaust them, on account of the weeds, but round fresh gut, properly knotted, and soaked preparatory to its being used, will, when the elastic powers of the rod are put into proper play in conjunction with it, master more opposition than it gets credit for.

Reverting to my tour in 1831. I fished up the Tummel on the 18th of July, to the loch bearing the same name. The scenery on that portion of the river amply makes amends for the rather indifferent sport yielded by it. There are plenty of trout, but in point of size and general appearance they bear no propor-

tion to the seeming capabilities of the pools and streams which they inhabit. When we come to examine them, however, we find a great deficiency of nutritious feeding-ground: in some places bare rock, in others shifty gravel and smooth-worn stones, with which insect life is but scantily associated. On gaining the outlet of the lake, which consists of a long neck of water, this characteristic ceases. The alluvial deposits there collected form the source of rich and abundant sustenance, and encourage a rank growth of rushes, flags, and other lacustrine plants. In this range of water, immediately below the ferry-house, I caught, on the day above mentioned, a beautiful trout of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lbs., and another of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ . The ferry-house was at that time occupied by two brothers, both of whom were deaf and dumb. I recollect them as obliging, and, taking into account their infirmity, intelligent men. In their shieling, which was not particularly well furnished or commodious, I took up my night-quarters; a hearty meal, composed of the usual Highland fare—oat-cake, eggs, trout, and whisky—assisting me to make the best of a shake-down of dry heather, as the only apology for a bed the place could offer.

Early next morning I was in the boat along with one of my silent entertainers, and on the way up, under oars, to the head of the loch. After persevering for nearly an hour, I hooked a large trout, apparently one of five or six pounds' weight, which, owing to the faulty state of my tackle, or careless handling, broke away. This disappointment was followed by the escape of another fish, supposed, however, to be a pike, from a trolling-line in the rear of the boat. I held on beating the bays and well-reputed parts of the loch for an hour longer, when the breeze all at once dropped, and the sun broke fiercely forth. There was no use persevering any further, so I landed, and, after exchanging civilities with my boatman, proceeded to the upper part of the Tummel, with the intention, after breakfasting at the Bridge Inn, of fishing up to Loch Rannoch.

In 1854 I renewed my acquaintance with Loch Tummel, at a period of the year corresponding to that of my former visit. No great external change had been wrought upon it, or the surrounding scenery, but in respect to the contents of the lake, as far as vegetable and piscine life were concerned, these appeared to be very decidedly altered. I have observed, I may state, a similar revolution in progress on many lakes and rivers which I frequented in my younger days. What was formerly unobstructed water, clear, with the exception of a few desultory patches, from weeds, has gradually, a large expanse of it, become unserviceable for trolling purposes, owing to the springing up, in some places from a great depth, of aquatic plants. As a consequence of this dense growth the pike of Loch Tummel have greatly increased in numbers, while the trout have proportionably decreased. At the outlet of the lake, below the ferry-house, the first-mentioned fish appear to have taken up a position of offence. Evidently they swarm there in unusual quantities, instinct guiding them to that particular point or pass as one which affords both facilities and opportunities for an onslaught on the descending fry of those occasional salmon which, overcoming the lower falls of the river, have passed through the lake to the base of old Schiehallion.

On the occasion of my last visit to Loch Tummel, 20th July 1854, along with my youngest brother, we captured, in the course of an hour, half a dozen of these liers-in-wait, with no other apparatus than a couple of stiffish trouting-rods, and trolling tackle mounted on gimp and baited with small trout. Had we devoted the entire afternoon to the work, instead of wasting it uselessly along the shores of the loch in the hope of getting hold of one or two of its magnificent trout, I am convinced that we should have lugged out a score and upwards of these depredators.

Connected with the capture just mentioned, the following incident occurred:—From a small creek which diverged from the outlet spoken of, I had just landed a hungry-looking jack, two or



three pounds in weight, when to my surprise, within a yard of the spot where it seized my baited tackle, a trout rose. Accordingly, in expectation of catching it, I substituted for my gimptackle a gut casting-line, along with such appendages as are required in worm-fishing. In the course of a minute or two the trout, a half-pounder, was lying on the sward side by side with his natural enemy; and not a quarter of an hour after, another pike, abstracted from the very same spot, completed the trio.

This occurrence led to the discussion whether the trout in question was a chance-comer or a resident,—a stray traveller that had fallen into a den of cut-throats, or a privileged occupant of the locality, who, by virtue of his superior *status*, lived there with impunity. To take another view of the matter—not a very reasonable one certainly, but the natural history of some fishes is linked with things as strange,—was it not possible that, by some tacit understanding, this trout played the part of a decoy to the pike, and enticed victims towards the seizing points of their haunts? Or might not the fact of its occupying uninjured a centre-point within the garrison of its reputed foes, assist to show that pike, while they will readily assail injured trout, or the fry of salmon pushing seawards, will not press the attack upon healthy fish established in their beats?

Many other instances of this forbearance on the part of pike, or good understanding betwixt them and trout, I have met with, both on Till and Teviot; but the most singular one occurred in connexion with a small pond not sixty yards in circumference, situated near the Glen, or lower part of the Bowmont, in Northumberland. There I found both trout and pike cooped up together, and living in apparent harmony. My journal records the circumstance of capturing specimens of each fish on the 16th of June 1841, on the occasion of a meeting of the Glendale Fishing Club, out of this place. Immediately below Kelso Bridge, on the north side of the river, in what may be called the

Bathing Pool, being used as such by the juveniles of the town, the same to all appearance friendly footing is maintained by its mixed inhabitants. The hole in question is actually crowded with small trout, among which, as is well known, three pike, one apparently of nine or ten pounds in weight, have taken up their abode, and do not appear, when sailing about, to exercise any deterring effect upon their freckled companions, which feed boldly in their presence, and cross within a foot or two of their formidable jaws. Such instances of friendly relation, however, are to be looked upon with distrust, and do not disturb the fact that pike are most dangerous enemies to the young fry. In this light, should any attempt ever be made to facilitate the access of salmon through the Tummel to the higher district, it is desirable they should be viewed, and their present occupation of the loch and its outlet as much as possible interfered with.

## THE PIRATE OF THE LAKES.

### I.

GAILY rock the lily beds  
On the marge of Lomond lake ;  
There the wandering angler treads,  
Nature round him—all awake,  
Mountains ringing,  
Fountains singing  
Their sweet secrets in the brake.

### II.

Swiftly from the water's edge  
Shoots the fierce pike, wing'd with fear,  
To his lair among the sedge,  
As the intruding form draws near ;

All elated,  
Primely baited,  
Seeking solitary cheer.

## III.

Throbs aloud the eager heart,  
And the hand in tremor moves,  
When some monster, all alert,  
Round the tempting tackle roves ;  
    Boldly daring,  
    Or bewareing,  
While the gleamy lure he proves.

## IV.

Then at length each doubt subdued,  
Turns the lake-shark on his prey ;  
Quickly gulp'd the fatal food,  
Suddenly he sheers away,  
    All ensnackled,  
    Firmly tackled,  
Out into the deep'ning bay.

## V.

But with steady caution school'd,  
Soon his boasted vigour fails ;  
By the angler's sceptre ruled,  
Maim'd the sullen pirate sails ;  
    Shoreward wending,  
    Uncontending,  
*Him* the joyous captor hails.

## VI.

And along the margin haul'd,  
All his fretful fins a-spread.

Though by ruthless iron gall'd,  
Still he rears his cruel head  
Uncomplaining,  
Death disdaining—  
See him as a trophy led !

In my pedestrian tour in 1841, on leaving Loch Tummel, I fished up the river to Kinloch-Rannoch. The weather being calm and sunny, the sport was indifferent. Had I provided myself with worms, and been an adept at that time in the use of them, I should probably have been more successful. On the same stretch of river, my brother, Captain Stoddart, some ten or twelve years after, filled a large creel by means of this bait. From Kinloch-Rannoch, on the following day, I proceeded towards the head of the lake, which is nearly twelve miles in length. The weather was still inauspicious for fly-fishing. I managed, however, to eke out of the most inviting bays a pretty satisfactory take, numbering nearly three dozens, none of which exceeded a pound in weight. With a specimen of the *ferox*, so abundant in Loch Rannoch, and as a captor of which that expert troller, Major Cheape, stood unrivalled, I had no opportunity afforded me of falling in. From forty to fifty of these monster trout, weighing from four up to sixteen pounds, have been taken by the Major in the course of a season. The form of tackle which he employs is extremely simple in its construction, and wonderfully efficient. I have one by me which came, through the hands of a friend, from the direct source. It consists of three hooks tied on triple gut, two of which, size No. 7 on Philip's scale of measurement, are set in the form of the ordinary gorge-hook used for pike, at the head ; and below them, the point of its shank reaching up to their bend, is fastened the remaining one, No. 4.

On arriving at the head of Loch Rannoch, I obtained night

quarters at Georgetown—the township itself being concentrated, or nearly so, within the walls of the small inn. Early next morning I struck up the Gawin river, the proper continuation towards its fountain-head, near Glens Coe and Etive, of the Tummel. The course of this stream I pursued to where it is temporarily lost in a shallow lake called Loch Eatach. In shape of breeze and cloud, the weather proved favourable, and I had the satisfaction of counting out exactly one hundred trout. These, however, were mostly small, the average weight, in fact, not exceeding quarter of a pound.

On July 22d I passed over a heathy tract of country to the Lyon Water, which communicates with the Tay. The morning on which I set out was tolerably clear, but I well recollect how, on gaining the heights above Loch Rannoch, a mist settled down round about; then succeeded a kind of drizzle, which gradually lapsed into rain and violent wind. There was at that time no road, and the landmarks I was counselled to steer by were entirely shrouded up. In a wild, lonesome country, abounding in swamps—and there are scarcely any in Scotland drearier in their character, and more to be dreaded than those in the neighbourhood of the moor of Rannoch—the feeling of losing one's way is by no means agreeable. I was in this predicament to a certain extent, but I had a long stretch of daylight before me, as well as the advantage which was given by the wind's blowing steadily in one direction. Thus favoured, I pressed on with a resolution which only began to waver after a ten hours' march, when the sensation of tiredness took possession of my limbs, and that bewildering feeling crept over me which few who have not been similarly circumstanced can have a correct notion of. At this juncture, and just as I was on the point of stretching my soaked and exhausted limbs on the heather, a break in the cloud overhead betokened the bursting forth of the afternoon's sun. A

glow of light suddenly pervaded the atmosphere. - There was a commotion all round me. The hills became dismantled, as if by magic. From the face of that on which I stood floated in rapid succession masses of vapour. Onwards they swept, surging up from the hollows on every side. I had only to turn and watch their retreat towards the far heights, and again to direct my eyes downwards, to be made fully aware of the change which had taken place. It was like dreamland's self. I stood gazing, all at once, from a heath-clad eminence, up a green sun-lit valley, adown which, in full flood, coursed one of Tay's fairest tributaries. Bosky braes, knolls crested with tall firs, and hung with hazels, birches, and alder-wood ; ferns, rocks, and pastoral slopes — everything, in fact, which helps in a Highland landscape to enchant the eye, lay before me. The change, I need not say, acted like a spell. I was at the river's edge, in the heart of Glen Lyon, almost at a bound ; and in the course of a few minutes my rod and line were busy at work over the swollen stream. The afternoon was too far advanced, and I was too tired, to command anything extraordinary in the way of sport ; but the fresh supplies from the hills had stirred up the large trout, and encouraged them to feed in the shallows. Owing to this circumstance, I was so far fortunate as to secure several of the magnificoes of the river. In the way to Cushieville, where the inn is situated, I passed Fortingal, the stronghold of the forest, in the old churchyard of which the celebrated yew-patriarch of British trees, which dates from the days of Solomon, survives and flourishes. In 1853 I again dipped line in the river Lyon, but there was no inducement in the way of trout-fishing to ascend it to any height. It has been recommended to my attention, however, as one of the principal lines of diversion selected by the Tay grilse for spawning purposes ; and I have been further informed that in the upper ranges of Glen Lyon, in

a favourable season, the rod-fishing for salmon in autumn is superior to any which is to be obtained throughout Perthshire. By the words 'favourable season,' however, as applied to rod-fishing for salmon in that particular district, must be understood a course of wet weather, and a consequent succession of floods, by means of which the fish may be assisted up to the spawning-grounds with which this defile abounds.

From the inn at Cushieville I fished down Tay to Aberfeldy, and crossing Weem Bridge, re-ascended the river on the opposite side, with the view of reaching and holding in command points of effect bearing on the scenery round about Kenmore. In regard to the attractions which Aberfeldy offers to the angler, they are on a level with those presented by a great many Perthshire towns or villages, such, for instance, as Crieff, Dunkeld, Blairgowrie, and Pitlochrie: a loch or two within walking distance, a river indifferently stocked with trout, and, in regard to salmon-fishing, even when it can be commanded, not to be depended upon; a few streamlets charged with lean, hungry fry help to make them up. In one of the lochs near Moness, Loch Oyl by name, I fished in 1853, and caught some dozens of trout. These were not large, but red-fleshed, and held in esteem on account of their goodness. The Tay, here and there in that neighbourhood, and especially about Grantully, presents the eye with some fine salmon-casts. In summer, however, these are not to be relied on, except under conditions of water very different from those which are sought for on Tweedside. This is the case with most of our Highland streams. They require constant floods to keep them in angling trim, whereas the finest stretches of our Border rivers fish best when they have resumed their ordinary size and transparency. In that part of Tay also which I refer to, salmon do not appear to take with kindliness to their fresh-water habitations. Such an extent of captivating water, did it present itself

on Tweed, as is met with below Grantully, would be associated, like the Trows at Makerston, with sport throughout the whole season; but here it is not so. The range in question has its hold over the fish only as a very temporary halting-place. Instinct prompts, evidently, to desert it, and aspire to points in the river, which, although the angler may not be able to detect in what particular, let him rest assured are more accommodating to the habits of the salmon.

I had but a brief, yet sufficient opportunity of judging of this portion of Tay in 1853. On that occasion, in the Edrady-nate casts, a short way above Grantully, I was fortunate enough, at the very outset, with a small fly of the Sutton pattern, to raise and kill a fine fish of nearly 20 lbs. All chance of further sport with the salmon-fly was rendered hopeless during my sojourn at Moness, by the occurrence of warm sunny weather, but that did not prevent my testing the various pools, in order to ascertain whether they held salmon in any quantity. I devoted the best part of three days to the investigation, and combining the results arrived at with information gathered from local anglers, I feel authorized to say that the stretch of water in question, although very superior to any betwixt Logierait and Murthley, will not stand comparison with even a second-rate salmon beat belonging to Tweed.

My tour of 1831 led me by Aberfeldy to a small inn situated at the foot of Ben Lawers, half-way up Loch Tay. Apart from the discomforts of the place which I selected for a Sunday's halt, I met with no success, either on the Saturday afternoon or Monday morning, on the lake itself. My ill-fortune must not be set down as any criterion of the sport to be obtained on Loch Tay. I have reason to know, however, that as regards trout, it is held in poor estimation by the angler. There is fine trolling ground for salmon over portions of it, and in favourable weather, during



the spring months, under conduct of one well versed in the subaqueous territory, an exciting run or two may be calculated on.

From Loch Tay I passed on to Killin, amusing myself for an hour in the Lochy, a short way above where it enters the Dochart. Rains having fallen on the high grounds during the night, this stream, which above the point of junction is of a level character, was in good order, and invitingly ruffled. The trout in consequence rose freely. At Killin I spent some time watching the mode of catching salmon practised at the Bridge Pool. I then struck up the valley of the Dochart towards Luib, wetting feather occasionally on the river as I proceeded. The day had become too bright and calm to expect sport with the fly, no discoloration from rain, such as had affected its feeder, having taken place in the main stream. As a trouting river, the Dochart was held in high estimation by the late Professor Wilson, and formed, in the neighbourhood of Luib, the scene of one of his last angling explorations, in 1845. Mrs. Gordon, in the admirable Memoir drawn out by her of her father (vol. ii. p. 296), gives an account of this visit, along with two letters of the Professor's, in which he details the sport met with.

The rod-fishing for salmon, I may mention, on the Dochart, near Luib, during summer, is more to be relied on than what at that season is met with in Strath-Tay itself. To account for this, besides the presence of the fish, and such facilities as are given by the reduced size and natural boarding up of the river, in the way of commanding the salmon-casts, there is to be taken into consideration the lower temperature of the water, incident to the altitude of its course, during the hot months.

From Luib I progressed to Lochearnhead, and from thence on to the Trossachs, fishing in my way the Strathire or Balvaig river, and Loch Lubnaig. On leaving the Trossachs I walked up

Loch Katrine, occasionally passing a fly over the most tempting of its baylets, to Glen Gyle. After an hour's toying with the moor-trout in the linns of Glen Gyle burn (the springs of which are now directed towards the throats of thirsty teetotallers and punch-bibbers in Glasgow), I took to the heather, and close upon sunset arrived at the heights which front Loch Lomond at its upper extremity. Having descended these, I pressed towards Auldtarnan, an inn at the foot of Glen Falloch, where, as far as I can recollect, I found comfortable quarters for the night. Next morning, July 28th, I fished up Glen Falloch as far as the main road allowed, and proceeded by the Strathfillan water to Tyndrum. When reverted to at this distance of time, the sport I met with after leaving the Dochart, up to the stage above named, was extremely discouraging, but it affords simple evidence of the fact, that it is useless, unless favoured by adventitious weather, to press the acceptance of artificial flies, let them be ever so killing to the eye of the angler, upon trout in midsummer, when bottom food is so abundant. Were I to go over the same water now, I mean the running portion of it, at the same season, and under the same conditions, I should without scruple or hesitation substitute the worm for feather-work, in the perfect confidence of being able to realize a tenfold aggregate.

Leaving Tyndrum, I proceeded to the Urchay, the main feeder of Loch Awe, a river held in fair repute by the salmon-fisher. Its spring casts, however, over which the tenant of the inn and farm at Dalmally exercises control, are limited in extent. The early salmon are seldom known to be taken with the rod higher up than Caitnish, where there is a fall or Ess of some height. It is only during autumn, or in the grilse season, that fish in any quantity move towards Loch Tolla, in the heights of Glenorchy, where, at Ardvrecknish, one of the Earl of Breadalbane's principal shooting-lodges is situated. After breakfasting

at Dalmally, I proceeded along the banks of Loch Awe to Cladich, from whence, having appeased my piscatorial *furor* for the summer, I trudged over the hill to Inverary, and took the earliest opportunity which steam communication afforded of reaching Glasgow.

## THE VINDICATION.

## I.

SAY not our hands are cruel,  
What deeds provoke the blame ?  
Content our golden jewel,  
No blemish on our name ;  
Creation's lords,  
We need no swords  
To win a withering fame.

## II.

Say not in gore and guile  
We waste the live-long day ;  
Let those alone revile  
Who feel our subtle sway,  
When fancy-led  
The sward we tread,  
And while the morn away.

## III.

Oh ! not in camp or court  
Our best delights we find,  
But in some loved resort  
With water, wood, and wind :

Where nature works,  
And beauty lurks  
In all her craft enshrined.

## IV.

There captive to her will,  
Yet, 'mid our fetters free,  
We seek by singing rill  
The green and shady tree,  
And chant our lay  
To flower and fay,  
Or list the linnet's glee.

## V.

Thus glides the golden hour  
Until the chimes to toil  
Recall from brook and bower ;  
Then, laden with our spoil,  
With beating heart  
We kindly part,  
And leave the haunted soil.

In an excursion taken along with my friend Wilson, I revisited, in 1832, some of the rivers and lakes fished by me in the previous year. The Teith, Lochs Vennacher and Achray, were severally dipped into. The Teith, I may remark, is one of those rivers of which a great deal might be made as a breeding stream for salmon. It is in reality, when compared with its recipient the Forth, although not possessing the same depth and extent of tideway, the larger and more direct stream. The salmon, on attaining the point of junction, show a decided preference for its

sweet clear-running current; and were the breeding-grounds in connexion with it extended into Balquhiddar, which could readily be effected by opening up the Pass of Leny, an immense deal of benefit would accrue, both to parties interested in the lower fishings, and to the proprietors of the river in general. One cause of the falling off of the Forth fishings, which has pressed heavily upon them for the third of a century, has been the steam navigation carried on betwixt Alloa and Stirling. The line of river communication betwixt these towns is indirect and circuitous, extending to more than twenty miles, whereas by land it does not much exceed seven. The employment of steamers within this contracted portion of the tideway has always been open to objections, but now that the benefits derived from it are to be obtained more expeditiously, and at a less cost, by means of a direct line of rail, there can be no pretence but a vexatious one for keeping up this mode of communication. At any rate, the offer of a small compensatory sum might act as an inducement to its relinquishment, as a result of which a vast improvement of the salmon-fishings might be looked forward to with confidence, the Teith and Allan waters to their fountain-heads sharing the benefit.

Crossing over to Loch Lomond, we halted on the 27th of June at Glen Falloch, and I find it recorded in my journal, that on the following day, a fine freshet occurring, I took with the fly, from the Falloch river, 110 trout—a similar number being captured by my friend. The 29th of June found us quartered at Dalmally, the scene of our angling operations being a petty lake in the neighbourhood of Tyndrum, out of which I drew two dozens of small trout. On the 30th we fished Loch Awe, near Cladich, with indifferent success. On the 2d of July, a fine breeze prevailing, I again fished the lake, partly from a boat and partly wading along that portion of it which is termed the Brandir,

superintending its outlet. I also gave the river Awe a trial with trout-flies. The contents of my pannier, at the close of the day, bordered upon five dozens, among which were several of about a pound in weight. My friend, who joined me at Bunaw, accomplished, on the same day, the capture of sixteen dozens, from a lochlet situated two or three miles above Cladich.

To Loch Awe has been ascribed, as its *locale*, the discovery of that species of *Salmo*, to which, on account of its predatory habits, naturalists have assigned the appellative *ferox*. This so-called discovery could merely refer to the recognition as a species of what was formerly held to be nothing more than a variety of the *fario*, or common fresh-water trout; for, as to the existence, not only in Loch Awe, but in other Highland lakes, of large trout, rapaciously inclined and armed with formidable jaws, it was very improbable that, until near the end of last century, when the discovery is said to have taken place, it should have remained a secret. Indeed, the disclosure in question does not depend, as alleged, in the slightest degree upon the exercise of skill shown by any one angler, or upon this or that wonderful piece of good luck he may have fallen in with, but it occurs periodically, as a matter of course, in the spawning season, when the fish, repairing to the fords and shallow feeders, take no great pains to hide themselves, leaving it seemingly to the prudence and generosity of mankind not to disturb or injure them. This is exemplified particularly with regard to the *Salmo ferox* on the Ald Eitach river, a feeder of Loch Rannoch, which, for breeding purposes, is preferred by the species named to any other sources of supply. There the great lake-trout have been in the habit of congregating from time immemorial, and passed periodically under review, nay, writhed on the prongs of the leister long before the troller's apparatus was invented or brought to bear against them. In respect to the recognition by naturalists of

the monster trout of some of our Highland lakes, I am disposed to think it has been carried too far, or rather that there has been a want of care shown in making the separation; for, judging from a number of specimens examined by me of the reputed *ferox*, I make bold to say that, in nine cases out of ten, what are passed off as such present no peculiarities in their structure and appearance, beyond what age and size may sufficiently account for, which warrant their being regarded as anything else but large common trout. It is not often that the naturalist falls into this error; he is usually too nice in his distinctions, and too fond of amplification. Of this habit, the setting up of the gillaroo trout of Loch Muloch Corrie, in Assynt, is an example; so is the assignation of a specific character, simply on account of its being furnished with a greater number of coecal appendages than any of its congeners, to the Lochleven trout. I can see no end, when once entered upon, to this conversion of mere varieties of the *fario* into separate and distinct species.

As a consequence, in fact, of the recognition of the *Salmo cæcifer*, or *Levenensis* of Parnell, arose the claims advanced by Dr. Knox in favour of what he terms the estuary-trout, and the endeavour made by him, in that curious production entitled *Fish and Fishing in the Lone Glens of Scotland*, to derange, as far as it has been already established, the natural history of the *Salmonidæ*. Almost at the outset of this little work, the Doctor startles us with the following. Discoursing on the *genera*, or natural families of *Salmones*, as he terms them, he proceeds:— ‘There is first the *Salmo salar*, or trout; some call it the *fario*.’ Eh? ‘2*d*, The *Salmo trutta*, or sea-trout, universally called “trout” simply by the salesman; 3*d*, The *Salmo*, or true salmon.’ Then, after a page or two of twaddle about the dentition of the fish, as forming one of the best guides, in the shape of characteristic marks, to the above-mentioned classification, he

arrives at this conclusion respecting the species of the different genera :—‘ I may observe that in Scotland there are at least four distinct species of trout, viz., ‘ I. 1st, The dark-spotted lake-trout; 2d, the red-spotted estuary-trout: they have pink-coloured flesh, and are excellent to eat; 3d, the red-spotted common river-trout, with pale flesh and tasteless; 4th, the pink-coloured, red-spotted common river, chiefly found in England; 5th’ (he has discovered, it appears, three other species), ‘ the parr trout, rather better, when fed in certain rivers, than the common red-spotted trout, but never equal to the pink-coloured fish; 6th, the dark-spotted river-trout, of whose natural history I know but little, although I believe such a trout exists; and, 7th, the *Salmo ferox*, or great lake-trout of the north. II. Of the *Salmo salar*, or sea-trout’ (the *salar* is no longer the *fario*), ‘ the angler will meet with several species hitherto not well determined. One ascends the rivers earlier than the other; it is the common sea-trout. The other takes to the fresh-water streams at a later period of the year; it is the so-called bull-trout. Lastly, of doubtful fish, there is—1st, the parr; 2d, a fish with the external appearance of a salmon, but with a dentition combining that of the common river and sea-trout or salmon; 3d, a fish strongly resembling a salmon, and almost as good to eat, which appears in the London markets early in October; it is marked all over with darkish spots, like some trout. This fish, I have been told, comes from Scotland, but I have not met with it there.’

What are we to infer from all this, and a great deal more of jumbled up and contradictory matter, emanating from the pen of so distinguished an observer? Does it help to render satisfactory any system of classification adopted by naturalists, when we find a master of comparative anatomy so high in repute passing to such conclusions? Surely, at least, some consistency and



accuracy in the application of generic terms might have been expected before the specific distinctions insisted on by the learned Doctor were thrust into parade. The estuary-trout introduced by him is like his 'lone trout of the Whitadder,'—a myth all over ; and as for the dentition of the fish presenting a correct and trustworthy generic test, the most cursory examination of this provision in the *Salmones*, will, I think, lead to its rejection altogether in that capacity. I must say, that if the natural history of the *Salmonidæ*, as it stands, has really been built up and fortified by such doubtful materials as those contributed to it by Dr. Knox, the sooner it undergoes a complete re-organization the better.

To these remarks I have been led by the conclusions generally entertained in respect to the large trout of some of our Highland lakes, as being individuals of a species quite distinct from the *fario*. I have consorted them with Loch Awe, because it was to the spotted rovers of this sheet of water that, as far as I can discover, the term *ferox* was first applied. Nor would I have felt tempted to quarrel with the specific character attributed without due discrimination to those fish, had it not given opportunity to complicate the arrangement still further. When I find, however, that it has led to this result, I think it high time to express some doubt as to whether the large predatory trout of many of our Highland lakes ought to be regarded in any other light than as overgrown individuals belonging to one or other of the endless varieties of the common fresh-water trout. The numerous specimens which have come under my observation incline me to form this opinion. Of four individuals taken in Loch Shin in 1850, two decidedly agreed in respect to build, external markings, and conformation of head. These were ugly, piratical-looking fish enough, having large and powerful jaws, furnished with an ample supply of sharp teeth ; but I have seen

their counterparts, on a smaller scale, among our river-trout in Tweed. What is called the swallow-smolt, in fact, bears an exact resemblance to them. A swarthy yellow pervaded the flanks of these fish, overlaid in profusion with irregular *maculæ* or blotches. In point of weight, the specimens I allude to were nearly equal, being about eight pounds apiece.

Whilst engaged in catching baits for trolling within the small loch which subtends Loch Shin close to Lairg, I descried, floating near the surface of the water, another specimen, weighing about fourteen pounds, of the same variety of monster trout. This was secured by the gaff-hook, and examined. As there were no marks of violence on its person, it was concluded that it had died a natural death. My impression regarding these fish at the time, and it remains unimpaired, was that they were merely overgrown individuals of the species *fario*, and that trout, in all respects corresponding to them, might be raised simply by the transplantation of a limited number of common fresh-water trout, from a stream where they are rarely known to attain the weight of half-a-pound, into a piece of artificial water of large range, but affording precarious means of subsistence, say minnows or loaches, which require to be hunted down, and so induce to predatory habits. The relation, in fact, betwixt such small fry and the others is precisely similar to that which the cuddie or podley of our sea-coasts bears to the saithe, or full-grown coal-fish.

Differing in many respects from such coarse and repelling specimens of the Loch Shin *ferox* (the appellative is appropriate enough), were the other individuals examined by me on this occasion. Of these, the larger one was as finely a proportioned fish as could be imagined—deep in the flank, the back gracefully curved, and the head well formed and of small dimensions. The external embellishments of this fish consisted of a few large

halo-encircled *maculæ*, regularly distributed above and below the lateral line, over a rich orange-coloured ground, which, as it approached the dorsal curve, assumed a violet tinge, and passed ultimately into a deep purple. The fins and tail were muscularly formed, but in point of size gave no indication of the possession of speed or power greater than what is held by the *salar*. Of teeth it had the usual complement pertaining to our common river-trout. They were adapted certainly to the seizure of small fish, but did not, on that account, denote indulgence in rapacious and cannibal propensities, to the exclusion of insect, or even vegetable diet. I mention *vegetable* sustenance, for it is no doubt engrossed to a large extent by fresh-water trout, and in the case of this particular individual, which was cooked and eaten at Achinduich on the day it was taken, although it cut redder than salmon, the flavour was weedy in the extreme. The kind of trout just described is rarely, I was told, met with in Loch Shin, in comparison with the coarser sort first mentioned; but it approaches nearer in structure and general appearance to the legitimate *ferox* of Loch Awe. The fish aspiring to this designation taken by me on Loch Assynt bore the characteristics of the more coarsely-formed trout antecedently described.

## WHEN THE ANGLER GOES A-TROLLING.

### I.

THE bell-throats o' the bonnie birds ring

When the angler goes a-trolling;

The chiding east wind droops his wing,

And Summer trips the step of Spring,

When the angler goes a-trolling.

## II.

A whisper from the angel's mouth,  
When the angler goes a-trolling—  
A melting whisper from the South  
Turns the intent of sun and drouth,  
When the angler goes a-trolling.

## III.

The skies their fairest canvas spread  
When the angler goes a-trolling ;  
Relenting clouds float overhead,  
And tears and smiles alternate shed,  
When the angler goes a-trolling.

## IV.

Tears warm and generous bathe his way,  
When the angler goes a-trolling ;  
Smiles chasing them the livelong day,  
Kind sunbeams with sweet showers play,  
When the angler goes a-trolling.

## V.

The white thorn wears a bridal wreath,  
When the angler goes a-trolling ;  
Flushes above him, and beneath,  
The flower-life of hill and heath,  
When the angler goes a-trolling.

## VI.

The river bears a richer freight  
When the angler goes a-trolling ;  
And in its passing flow of might  
Finds utterance to the new delight,  
When the angler goes a-trolling.

## VII.

Oh ! dulcet as the poet's rhyme,  
When the angler goes a-trolling ;  
Dulcet and glad the river's chime,  
A pæan in the march of Time !  
When the angler goes a-trolling.

## VIII.

The generous gushing of the springs,  
When the angler goes a-trolling ;  
The stir of song and summer wings,  
The light which shines, and life which sings,  
Make earth replete with happy things  
When the angler goes a-trolling !

The largest specimen of the Loch Awe *ferox* which I ever had an opportunity of seeing, weighed, when newly caught, a trifle above nineteen pounds. I am convinced, from inquiries made in the proper quarter, that among the trout on record taken by trolling within the last thirty years, the fish I refer to holds a prominent place. The excelling giants which tradition has assigned to this lake, fellows of two stone and upwards, are not to be found in the registers of any living angler. We are forced to connect them with the feats of a former generation of trout-slayers who were wont to wax provokingly magniloquent upon the quondam produce of this celebrated lake. I have often been tempted to quit my faith in the floating relations respecting the monster race which scoured its depths half a century ago ; but the impressions led to by the scenery round about,—the eagle abodes that face its outlet, and the swart moorland here and there hemming it round, in their association with haunts of a corresponding nature underneath, and apparently well suited

for the harbourage of star-sided prodigies, make me unwilling to lose hold of a belief so fascinating. There lives a spirit of romance about some of our Highland lakes, and this one in particular, which extends down to their very trout, and refuses to consort these with anything in point of size and attractiveness out of character with the general bearing. Many a blank day has been rendered, if not cheering, at least endurable, to the troller, under the pervading influence of the *genius loci*.

Often, on Loch Awe, has the mere run of a *ferox*, by help of this charm, although followed by the escape of the fish, induced to shape hopes of high success, and give edge, instead of blunting it, to the angler's perseverance. It is all right, too, that there should be traditions afloat regarding the bellicose *Salmones* of such storm-fed reservoirs—yarns spun under the shadowy shoulders of a Cruachan or a Schiehallion, of fish whose strength and dimensions accord with the wild and savage scenery round about. I for one surrender myself cheerfully to the imposture. I have no wish to become robbed of such roseate fiction as deals with fairies and pigmies, gnomes and ogres, mermaids and water-kelpies; neither any longer am I willing that to the exact and naked truth should be clipped down the marvellous incidents met with by anglers: the hairbreadth escapes of huge trout, shaped and beaked like Roman war-galleys; the runs, sullen and tedious, which last through a summer's noon on to sunset, and just at dusk are broken off by a fierce plunge, like that of a grampus, followed by a rush forward that exhausts the line, snaps the tackle, and smashes a twenty-foot rod into shivereens. Such materials for piscatorial story are to be met with still, and on Loch Awe as readily as anywhere. Why not put faith in them, and attach at the same time some measure of credibility to the vaunts of our progenitors?

My visits to Loch Awe were paid usually at a season of the year when trolling for the *ferox* was not much pursued, owing

partly to the luxuriant state of the aquatic weeds, and also to the disinclination of the fish to rove about in the daytime. The pike, moreover, at the season I allude to, interfere seriously with sport; and to those who are not equipped for taking them, or who would rather they were elsewhere, this interference becomes a matter of consideration. At the best, taking it by itself, trolling for the great lake-trout, I must say, is now-a-days very disheartening, because very precarious work. It should always, in order to keep it in countenance, be mixed up judiciously with fly-fishing or minnow-spinning near the surface; although it so happens that it is in the early part of the year, when the surface-feeding trout keep pertinaciously to their winter quarters, the *ferox* fisher is generally most successful. April, and even March, should be admitted without hesitation to the chief place in his calendar.

There is one circumstance worthy of notice in regard to the Loch Awe *ferox*, in fact it may be held as characteristic of that particular breed. It is this, that when impelled to congregate and pair off for spawning purposes, instinct, instead of guiding them to the tributaries of the lake—the Urchay or Avich, for instance—leads them to its lateral outlet, the Brandir Pass, a defile through which the waters of the loch make their escape to the sea, forming as they do so a river of about four miles in length. The accommodation sought for by the *ferox* on the course of the river Awe, seldom, if ever, extends to more than the main hang or throat of the river, or the one or two streams immediately in connexion with it. Here, in the months of September and October, they have been known to rise at and take the salmon-fly. Two individuals, some years ago, were taken in succession by the late Mr. Robertson of Kelso at this point, with a large Tweed pattern. One of these, now in Kelso Museum (an admirable and well-kept collection of objects in natural history, as well as other curiosities), weighed, when caught, up-

wards of seventeen pounds. It appears to have been a coarsely formed fish, but differs both in shape and external markings from the tyrant trout of Loch Shin. Loch Awe, I may state, was a favourite resort of Christopher North, and formed, along with the Dochart, one of the closing scenes of his angling career.

### TROLLING SONG.

#### I.

Let us go a-trolling, boys !  
A-trolling we shall go ;  
Now the showers are falling, boys,  
Now the south winds blow ;  
Where the trout  
Prowl about,  
Steadily, steadily let us row.

#### II.

See, the waves are dancing, boys !  
Around the mermaid isle ;  
Many a fin is glancing, boys,  
Oh ! weary runs the while,  
Till we speed,  
All agreed  
To troll, to troll the glittering guile.

#### III.

On the surface ranging, boys,  
We'll beat from bay to bay ;  
Lure and water changing, boys ;  
It is the angler's way,  
So we'll troll,  
One and all,  
And cheerily, cheerily pass the day.



## IV.

And again returning, boys,  
We'll talk our triumphs o'er,  
Tongue and bosom burning, boys,  
As they have burn'd before ;  
While we told  
Feats of old,  
We never, we never may equal more.

Reverting to our piscatorial stroll in 1832 : from Bunaw we started on the 3d of June, along the heights which superintend Loch Etive, with the intention of fishing the river Etive in the afternoon, and reaching Dalness about sunset. There was no track, not even a shepherd's, across the deep, in some places waist-deep, heather circling the base of Cruachan, through which we had to struggle, nor as a guide to our destination was there any needed, for the sea-arm stretched up towards the glen, and lay below us in inflexible stillness. Such another natural mirror as Loch Etive, one so reflective of the grand and the lovely, lies framed nowhere within our island. Its summer's-day pageant, in which cloud, precipice, and waterfall, masses of granite of huge dimensions, the gnarled remains of forests, weeping birch, heath, moss, and fern, severally take part, is fascinating beyond all power of description. The loch itself is more like a feeler than an arm of the salt abyss ; it stretches so far inland, and is so insinuating, so silent in its approaches, and in the bearing away of its mountain tribute. There is a glassy transparency about it, at the same time, that excels what usually belongs to fresh-water lakes. It is by the aid of this marine, or rather ultra-marine complexion, more than by any other distinguishing feature, the ebb and flow of the tide excepted, that its ocean origin becomes betrayed.

It was close upon eight o'clock in the evening (we had dipped by the way in the Kinglass water, and belaboured without much success the most inviting pools of the Etive river), when we arrived at what we had reliantly looked upon, in our chart of direction, as night-quarters. Dalness was, at that time, the only habitation having higher pretensions than a shepherd's or fisherman's hut, which stood betwixt the head of Loch Etive and King's House, a distance of nearly sixteen miles. Furnished with a missive from Mr. Macdonald, the proprietor, we never once dreamt of being refused admittance; nay, had we even been independent of this passport, our trust in the proverbial hospitality of the Highlanders would have rendered us quite at ease. Our surprise, therefore, was not a little, when, on producing our credentials, and civilly requesting accommodation for the night, the old dame who undid the latch coolly told us she had 'nae up-puttin' for the like o' us, and wasna gaun to fash hersel wi' twa chiels stravaigin' about wi' gads in their han's. There were ower mony o' thae clamjamfrey whar she cam fra.' In vain we protested, and attempted to explain the Laird's wishes. They were an enigma to her; so also appeared the fact of our being worn out, and requiring refreshments. She had 'naethin' to gi'e us but a soop o' milk and a bit bannie,' which she accordingly brought; and while we were discussing them, led us to conclude that the 'King's House was but a stap or twa up the waiter; and if the beddin' in't wasna sae braw, maybe we'd fin' the folk ceevil.' We ascertained, on after inquiry, that it so happened a change of tenantry had just taken place at Dalness, and that the repulse we met with was at the hands of a domestic—a Lowlander, let me add, unacquainted with the locality—to whose charge the house and any furniture it contained had been newly committed.

Having been astir on our pins since morning, barring an occasional ten minutes' halt on the hill-side, our sensations, on being

turned so unceremoniously adrift, were by no means the most agreeable. The character of the glen is that of savage seclusion, a feature which, under cloud of night, is necessarily associated with danger, in the shape, where there is no beaten road, of swamps and break-neck places; still the assurance given us by the correct old housekeeper of the propinquity of the inn and high road to Dalness, led us to feel no immediate anxiety about the matter of night-quarters. On the contrary, instead of taking every advantage which the daylight still remaining afforded us of passing up the glen, we were induced to spend it in the vicinity of a cascade or waterfall, forming a salmon-leap. Of this barrier to the progress of the fish in the river Etive, we had received a glowing description from the mouth of Professor Wilson. We did not feel justified, therefore, even under the circumstances of our fatigue, to omit paying it a visit.

While engaged, however, in watching the abortive attempts of the salmon to gain higher ground, we became startled into the propriety of raising anchor, by the overcast state of the sky, and the evident approach of a storm. As much sail, accordingly, as we were able to carry, was put into immediate requisition; the course pursued by us lying on the left bank of the river, pushing upwards. We had not proceeded above a mile or two before the night, accompanied with rain and wind, set in, the latter with some degree of violence. As long, however, as we remained buoyed up with the prospect of reaching King's House, for the signal-light of which we looked momentarily and eagerly, this unexpected demand upon our powers of further exertion was scarcely felt; but when, after a persevering advance, which lasted some hours, no such friendly intimation of shelter discovered itself, a reaction began to take place, and feelings both of exhaustion and embarrassment succeeded those by which we had hitherto been supported.

The night fortunately was not quite so dark but that we could

distinguish objects at the distance of three or four yards ; otherwise, to have escaped meeting with some serious casualty was almost impossible, as scaurs and ravines were of frequent occurrence, and we had occasionally to pick our way across the bed of some old torrent, made rough and dangerous with masses of sharp rock and unshapely seams and fissures. To give the details, however, of this nocturnal exploration up Glen Etive, and to describe the fatigue and bewildering sensations under which it was conducted, is not my intention ; suffice it to say that, with a kind, on my own part at least, of automaton resolution, we held on until daybreak, the first glimmering of which disclosed to us our position, on the side of a heathery steep overlooking a torrent or impetuous stream. It became plain that, if we were still in Glen Etive, we had passed, by a great way, that bend in the river, near which, on the opposite side, King's House is situated. It was also patent, that to proceed farther in the direction we were pursuing, were only to involve ourselves in greater difficulties. To cross the stream and move northwards, in the expectation of falling in, ere long, with the Parliamentary road, was the course which naturally suggested itself ; nor, having adopted it, were we deceived as to the result. Unfortunately, however, on gaining the desired point of security, instead of striking to the right, we passed down into Glencoe, where, on arriving at a roadside hut, we with great difficulty elicited from its Highland occupants the nature of our mistake.

We had accordingly to retrace our steps, and, after many painful exertions, arrived with racked limbs at King's House close upon four A.M. After taking a few hours' rest at this solitary inn, we deemed ourselves sufficiently recruited to proceed in the direction of Ballachulish, to the then proprietor of which, Mr. Stuart, father of Sir J. Stuart, one of the present Vice-Chancellors, we were provided with letters of introduction. On our way down Glencoe, we gave its river and Loch Treachten,

through which it passes, a trial with trout-flies. As a salmon and sea-trout stream, the Coe or Cona has some repute, but is dependent, like most of the Argyllshire waters, the Awe and Eachaig excepted, upon timeous rains. In respect to yellow trout it has little or no claim on the angler's attention, having a rocky channel bare of sustenance.

While at Ballachulish, in a small rivulet which runs through the policy grounds, I caught several trout, which it struck me were more invitingly shaped and marked than the produce of our mountain-streams in general, and betokened some peculiarity of feeding, possibly in connexion with limestone-rock.

On Monday, 9th July, we proceeded to Fort-William. The salmon-fishings of the Lochy were at that time prosecuted with net and coble, and in the hands of a tacksman, from whom we readily obtained permission to take a cast for sea-trout, and, in the course of the afternoon, were knee-deep, with our rods in full swing among the fine amber-coloured streams close to Inverlochy Castle. On the approach of dusk the white trout rose freely, and we had the satisfaction, before leaving off, of landing several newly-run specimens of about two pounds in weight, along with a few finnocks and yellow trout. At that period of our angling career we were not prepared for an encounter with large fish. As pedestrians, we were armed merely with light trouting-rods, and tackle to correspond. On our return to the inn at night, therefore, we had disasters as well as successes to talk over—a snapped top-piece, and more than one broken line and abstracted fly. The top-piece, fortunately, was easily repaired, but our mutual fly-stock, on examination, betrayed a great deficiency of whitling-hooks; nor, in order to supply this want, had we provided ourselves with dressing materials to a suitable extent. It was necessary, however, that we should remedy the omission, as our actual provision for the morrow's sport, in the shape of fly-hooks of the above description, had

been reduced to one or two doubtful patterns ; the favourite one, a green-bodied dun-wing, having been so sorely mauled in the evening's tussle as to prove unfit for further service.

A visit to the inn poultry-yard helped to put us in possession, fortunately, of feathers, hackles included, which, although of a coarse description, approximated in point of colour to what was desired ; and with a twitch or two of green worsted abstracted from the parlour crumbeloth, we contrived to make up half a dozen as deadly persuaders as ever issued from the fingers of an Evatt or a Blacker ; at least so, next day, notwithstanding their somewhat unartistic appearance, they proved to be. We were favoured, on the occasion of using them, with a fine breeze ; the river also was in good trim ;—circumstances which assisted, no doubt, to put us in conceit of our workmanship.

The result on the 10th was in keeping with the highest expectations of sport we had been led to form in regard to this river as the resort of sea-trout. My friend Wilson, however, met with by far the larger share of success—a result owing partly to his superior skill, and partly to the fact of his strictly confining himself to that particular range of water which, in all salmon rivers, may be set down as the *habitat* of the sea-trout when in good condition. In my then ignorance of the whereabouts of these fish, I pressed my investigations too far up, and although at the close of the day my creel showed fair, it was not to be put into competition with that of my friend, the weight of which, in sea-trout, might probably, judging from recollection, exceed two stone. I fished the Lochy once more, but, owing to its being under the influence of a drought, with indifferent success, on the 6th of August 1835. The reports received from it since lead me to believe that, in its connexion with the Spean, it is an admirable salmon stream, but somewhat precarious, as far as angling is concerned. As to its sea-trout and finnocks, there are not above two or three rivers in Scotland that can compete

with it in a regular way—that is to say, day after day, in spite of wind and weather, regard being paid to the proper haunts of these fish.

With respect to salmon-fishing, I may mention this singular circumstance, that there is no district in the north where the inclinations of the fish to rise at the artificial fly are so acted on by the conditions of the atmosphere, as that traversed by the Lochy and Spean. So notorious is this fact in the locality, that by the bearings of the mist alone, the suitableness of the day is determined. Should haze or foggiess prevail on the surrounding hills to any extent, the attempt to raise a fish, even in a pool where it has been ascertained salmon abound, is looked upon as so much waste of time. This peculiarity in the bearing of atmospheric influences upon the appetite or sportive inclinations of the migratory *Salmones*, does not everywhere hold good. On Tweed, where the mist actually rests on the river, and appears as it were to steam out of it, fish will often rise freely. I recollect on its tributary, the Teviot, killing two fine grilises one morning (27th August 1846), under pressure of as dense a fog as I ever breathed in.

## A PICTURE.

### I.

WE listen by the waters blue to voices that we love ;  
Sweet flowers are twinkling at our side, and willow leaves above ;  
Before us feeds the fearless trout, emerging from the calm,  
And bleats behind the fleecy ewe, upon its wandering lamb.

### II.

Delicious musings fill the heart, and images of bliss ;  
Ah ! that all pictures of the past were innocent as this !  
That life were like a summer-trance beneath the willow shade,  
Or a ramble at the river side, when the song-spirit fills the glade.

On the 11th of July we started for the Spean, which joins the Lochy at Mucomre Bridge, eight miles from Fort William. As accessory to the formation of the Caledonian Canal, a cutting was made, in the early part of the present century, betwixt Loch Lochy and the point of confluence above-named, where, through the medium of an artificial waterfall, the progress of the salmon into Loch Arkaig becomes intercepted.

Loch Arkaig, I may mention, is a noble sheet of water nearly sixteen miles in length, and was previously the favourite resort of these fish, presenting as it does, in the feeders which traverse Glen Dessary, Mealy, etc., ample and congenial spawning accommodation. To re-open a means of ascent for salmon to this range of country would be desirable, and could easily, in these engineering days, be accomplished. In the event of this being done, an additional interest would accrue to the Locheil district, and to that magnificent pass through which Loch Arkaig discharges its overplus into Loch Lochy, designated in Gaelic à *Milé Dorch*, or the Dark Mile.

As we ascended the Spean towards Roy Bridge, we were invited by the appearance of one or two of the more accessible pools in this impetuous river, to pass a trouting-fly over them; but the result not proving satisfactory, we unmounted our rods and moved onwards. The night of the 11th was passed at the inn of Roy Bridge, near Keppoch, and next day, after proceeding a few miles up the Spean, we assorted our fishing gear, and set to work on the upper part of the river, not far from where it leaves Loch Laggan. There the streams assume quite a different character from that maintained by them in the lower section of the glen. About eight miles from the loch, the Spean, at that time, was crossed by a rocky barrier, of height sufficient to intercept the progress of the salmon towards the Badenoch district. It was in contemplation some years ago, by those interested in the upper fishings, to get rid of that obstacle, the calculated



expense of doing so being a mere trifle ; but that this design was ever put into execution I have not been able to ascertain. The feasibility of the project, however, appears to have been unquestioned, and the results anticipated were set down as of some importance, access being thereby given to a reach of spawning-ground characterized as about the best in Scotland.

This assertion, however, as to the superior nature of the breeding accommodation, is to be received with some degree of reserve. It plainly refers to that singular accumulation of sand at the head of Loch Laggan, formed by its main feeder, the Pattaig, which mass of *detritus* has been resolved, by the joint action of wind and water, into an extensive shoal, occupying scores of acres. Similar accumulations, but on a much smaller scale, are to be found in other Highland lochs—Loch Shin, for instance. But although, during winter, these may reap the benefit of being traversed by a perceptible current—a condition which, as respects deposited salmon spawn, is essential to the vitality and hatching of the *ova*—still they want the characteristics of fertile breeding-ground. They are deficient in that special requisite—compactness. The material of which they are composed is much too fine and shifty in its nature. There is no shelter in combination with it. In fact, it is not the sort of substance, or mixture of substances, to which salmon, for spawning purposes, are inclined to resort. At the same time, in regard to Loch Laggan, independent altogether of this reach of presumed accommodation, I have no doubt, in the case of a free approach being opened up, coupled with the introduction of impregnated salmon *ova* into properly selected portions of the Pattaig or Upper Spean—a process which, as a matter of course, should be associated on all occasions with the extension of breeding territory, otherwise the experiment cannot be looked upon as completed—that the district fishings will gradually become improved.

A mile or two above the rocky barrier to which I have referred we commenced trouting. Throughout the morning threatenings of rain had prevailed, which became realized just as we arrived at a stretch of the river differing in its conformation from that already passed, and evidently more suited to give shelter and sustenance to fresh-water trout. This was the neck of the Spean, in its conjunction with Loch Laggan. Here we found the trout not only abundant, but a fair proportion of them good-sized, approaching a pound in weight. The rain setting in heavily, they rose with freedom. Having fished over that portion of the river to our satisfaction, we had recourse to the loch itself, from the coves and baylets of which, and more particularly at the mouths of the small hill-feeders, which had been put into rapid motion by the pluvial discharge, we elicited some fine trout. Of two or three of the choicest of these fish I retain a lively recollection, not on account of anything remarkable about their size, but because of their splendid shape, and the brilliant orange and golden tinge which invested them. The paucity also, but chaste setting and arrangement of the *maculæ*, formed a point of attraction. I find in my diary an entry of six dozen trout as my share of the sport on that occasion. Of these, three were upwards of a pound in weight, and a large proportion of the others half-pounders.

The length of Loch Laggan is about eight miles. It is surrounded by scenery of a highly imposing description, and skirted here and there with forest remains, in some instances of large dimensions and fantastic form. In the background, to the south, stretches the Ben-Alder range of hills, which formed portion of the great Caledonian Forest. These occupy the space betwixt Lochs Laggan and Ericht. In the secluded glens with which they are intersected red-deer abound, and the ptarmigan has its haunts among their rocky heights. On our road to the upper part of the lake, where the inn is situated, we were overtaken by

the landlord, a humorous character in his way, but, as we afterwards ascertained, not particularly careful in distinguishing the *meum* from the *tuum*. In the Justiciary Court records, a person with a name very similar to his, and associated with Loch Laggan-side, flourishes as a sheep-stealer. In partaking of his cheer, therefore, I am led to suspect that we were the unwitting resettlers of stolen mutton, and this conclusion is strengthened by the recollection that, on leaving his roof, there was an impression on our minds that undue freedom had been taken with the contents of our pockets during the night-watches.

While quartering here, my friend Wilson was directed by our host to a small lake and its connecting rivulet, on the opposite side of Loch Laggan, to reach which, there being no boat at command, he had to wade the shoal at the mouth of the Pattaig. From this mountain tarn it was dark long before he returned; and as he had to repossess the ford alluded to, no little anxiety was expressed on his account. He came safely back, however, with not only his creel, but his handkerchief and pockets crammed with trout, twenty-six dozens in all, which, averaging them at one-fourth of a pound each, and the average I think was heavier, speaks to seventy-eight pounds. On the day of this extraordinary take, the result both of judgment and great perseverance, I clung to the banks of the Pattaig, and such portions of Loch Laggan in the vicinity of the inn as could be fished with some chance of success from the margins. In the Pattaig I was disappointed, as I had been led, from its position as main feeder to the lake, and from its being in fairish trim, to expect sport in the way of large trout, which, I thought it probable, would at that season of the year have crowded into it in search of food, if not for the purpose of pairing. After beating, however, this river for two hours, during which, although I encreeled two or three dozens of lean, shabby trout, no monster showed face, I abandoned it, without gaining much by the change, for the lake

itself. This is not the only occasion in which a disappointment in regard to the contents of the leading source of supply to a fresh-water loch containing large trout has occurred to me. I have met with it over and over again in other places where the main feeder was in splendid condition, and naturally, from its being so, led to the expectation of extraordinary success.

On the 14th, leaving Loch Laggan, we passed on by the Government road to Dalwhinnie, and thence to Dalnaspidal, where, meeting the Garry a short way below its parent lake, a fine sheet of water, about six miles in circumference, locked in on all sides by abrupt hills, and containing large well-flavoured trout, we fished down to Dalnacardoch. There, in its very comfortable and commodious inn, we spent the night, and having met with very indifferent sport, resolved, as there was no prospect at that season of the year of commanding success with the fly, to direct our steps with all haste towards Perth, and thence to Edinburgh, visiting Loch Leven in our way. This resolve was accordingly put into execution; a succession of what may be termed forced marches bringing our tour to a termination.

## BE BUSY, GOOD ANGLER, BE BUSY !

### I.

WHEN the streams rise,  
When the wind flies,  
With hope and delight we grow dizzy,  
And all a-ear  
Airy words hear,  
' Be busy, good angler, be busy !'

### II.

Then we prepare  
Tackle and hair,

And levy fair minnows full plenty ;  
Or arm'd with hoe  
A-gathering go  
Of brandlings and dew-feeders dainty.

## III.

Then from the spring  
Mosses we bring  
To store our fresh baits before starting ;  
Young and unshorn,  
Green in the horn,  
Cull'd when the clouds are departing.

## IV.

Thus duly stored,  
Cunning or froward,  
No fish can say nay to our tackle ;  
While each we ply,  
Worm, penk, or fly,  
Grey palmer or liveried hackle.

## V.

Heigh for a wind  
Gushing behind !  
Heigh for a cloud dark and showery !  
Foaming and freed  
Let the stream speed  
Under the willow-bough flowery.

## VI.

So may we start  
Joyous in heart

With hope and felicity dizzy,  
And still a-near  
Airy words hear,  
'Be busy, good angler, be busy!'

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### ANGLING ABOUT EDINBURGH FORTY YEARS AGO.

It was out of a mere thread of water, discharging itself into the Firth of Forth, betwixt the towns of Largo and Elie, that I drew my first trout. This boyish exploit, although performed nearly half a century ago, I look back upon as the event of yesterday, and can realize the spot where it took place, in my mind's eye, as distinctly as if I actually occupied it. A sorry drain, indeed, contrasted with Tweed and its feeders, was Cockle-Mill Burn; not in some places more than six or seven spans in width. Yet, insignificant as it was, my recollections of it are associated with the capture of fine plump trout, averaging half a pound in weight, the run and escape of a whitling, the slaying of sundry eels and flounders, not to mention shrimps and shell-craft, the denizens of its shallow estuary.

My first successful essay in angling was made with the worm, under the direction of my father, an adept in bait-fishing, as it was practised by the old school; but the ambition to catch a trout with the artificial fly followed, and the opportunity to gratify it was not long in presenting itself. The scene of this second exploit, so to term it, is as distinctly impressed on my memory as the one just referred to. It lay on the Teith, close to the Roman Camp, at Callander. The flies used were plain brown hackles, and the fish taken simply a few parrs or salmon fry. Whilst summering during the holidays in this locality, fly-fishing was my constant amusement, and I soon became competent to deal with the *spolia meliora* of the river; as for the *opima*,

these were reserved for much later opportunities. The Keltie and Bracklinn Burns, Lochs Lubnaig and Vennachar, the Stank Burn and Achray Waters, are all summoned up at this moment, in connexion with the angling excursions of my boyhood. It was at this time also that I landed my first pike, or jack—a fish probably not quite three pounds in weight, but which at that time, no doubt, was regarded by its captor as a perfect monster. I also picked up some knowledge of the art of spinning the minnow, and have distinct recollections of capturing two trout, at least, of excelling dimensions, with that lure. Fully enamoured with the sport, on my return from Callander to Edinburgh scarcely a Saturday or other holiday passed that did not find me by the side of some stream or pool in the vicinity of our Scottish capital. Most familiar to my footsteps were the banks of the Water of Leith, the Almond, the Esks; Gogar, Bavelaw, and Glencorse Burns; Compensation Pond, Lochs End and Duddingstone; whilst now and then, for variety's sake, I shifted the scene of my sport to the sea-margins, and bobbed for podlies and lucky proaches (*Cottus scorpius*) from the end of the wooden pier at Trinity, or Newhaven harbour.

The Water of Leith, however, was my favourite resort on these occasions. With the exception of a few pools above Slateford, the whole of this stream was, at the time I speak of, open to the angling fraternity. I was in the habit of thrashing it unchallenged all the way up from St. Bernard's Well to Little Vantage. Although the prime portions of this stream lay above Malleny, on which range I have taken, in the course of a day's fishing, as many as five or six dozens of yellow trout, yet on the very skirts of Edinburgh sport was occasionally met with. At Coltbridge, trout were then not only numerous, but of a respectable size. I recollect seeing one exhibited at a shop in Rose Street which weighed eight pounds. This fish was taken with a midge-fly at the mouth of a water-course, used for the purposes

of irrigation, which entered the river on the south side, within a few yards of the Corstorphine road. Fellows weighing upwards of a pound I have occasionally landed, and, as I imagined, hooked and played larger ones. It was by no means unusual for me to take two dozen and upwards of trout in this locality. On reference to my journal I find such captures frequently recorded. My success on the higher portions of this stream may be judged of from the following extracts:—

Near Currie,	April 2, 1834,	s. flies,	72 trout.
Ditto,	April 3, 1834	„	60 „
Slateford,	April 7, 1834	„	45 „
Above Currie,	May 28, 1835	„	98 „
Ditto,	June 3, 1835	„	78 „

The Water of Leith, I may here mention, finds place among the salmon streams named in the old Scots Acts, to which conservators were appointed by the Crown. At what period the *salar* ceased to frequent this stream cannot be ascertained with any accuracy, but I have my father's authority for stating that, when a boy, he well remembered being one of a boat's crew which gave chase to a salmon in the Water of Leith, and by the assistance of the oars, and a boat-hook, succeeded in capturing it. This incident, I have reason to think, took place about the year 1780. My earliest instructor in fly-fishing was a Mr. Wilson from Glasgow; but the most valuable lessons I ever received were given by an eccentric genius who presided over a small but highly-exalted tackle-shop in the High Street of Edinburgh, not far from the Tron Church—in fact, fronting Niddry Street. His name was Rawson—Bill Rawson. There was another of that name—a brother, I believe—who followed the same occupation in Princes Street. The character, however, I allude to, was a thinnish, white-haired old man, with a glittering eye, like the Ancient Mariner's, and a leg which, if not altogether game, might have claimed exemption, I won't say *in toto*, but certainly on



some footing or other, from the Sound dues. The other Rawson was stouter in person, and wore a brown intimidating wig; and as I don't recollect ever seeing him, although frequently in his shop, astir on his pins, the impression remains with me that he had a double share of impotency in his understandings. As it was, Bill Rawson of the Old Town contrived, in spite of his lameness, to be much during the summer afternoons on the shores of the Lethean stream; and a more expert layer on of the trouting-fly I have seldom met with; nor, independent of this qualification, was there at the time I speak of a neater-handed dresser of fly-hooks, particularly of midges and 00's, or double-nothings, as they were then termed, fashioned out of a scanty twitch of hare-lug or water-rat fur, and a few fibres plucked from the wing of some small bird. I preferred those taken from the edged or back portion of the feather belonging to the pinion of the starling, which exhibits two colours, or rather separate shades of colour, corresponding to what is so much esteemed in the composition of some of our killing Scottish salmon-flies, the dun white-tip, for instance. Such midges—seldom anything bigger—were the favourites from Slateford downwards. Stewart, I see, in his deservedly popular treatise on angling, has introduced Rawson's flies as subservient to summer fishing in our small Scottish rivulets; but I do not admit his own (S.'s) claim to be the original constructor of them, or the earliest proclaimer of their efficacy. They have been long held in repute throughout the Lothians three among the veterans of our craft, and commended in angling lore nearly half a century ago. As for bait-fishing, in this portion of the Water of Leith it was not much practised; indeed, the only baits relied on were the minnow and salmon-roe—the latter introduced by my old friend the late Monsieur Senebier, a fine-hearted, worthy angler of the bygone school, whose notions of sport, however, were not always orthodox.

Senebier had the true touch at his finger-ends of an adept in

the art of bait-fishing. He knew when and how to strike home, a knack only acquired after long practice, and quite indispensable when brought to bear against such trout as those dainty and full-paunched ones which populated thirty years ago the Colt-bridge Pool. Monsieur Senebier, early in life, held a commission in the French navy at the commencement of the present century, and was introduced to Scotland as a prisoner of war. A more amicable connexion with it was formed by him as a teacher of his native language, in which capacity he resided several years at Aberdeen, transferring the scene of his exertions, in course of time, to Edinburgh, where his obliging manners and fine disposition, not less than his abilities as an instructor, procured him many and lasting friendships.

A large proportion of the hours snatched from professional labour were devoted by this zealous sportsman to angling, and the twisting and plaiting of fishing-lines, the material used by him being one much too costly to become employed in their general fabrication—indeed not particularly well adapted for it, as far as strength and durability are concerned—I mean female hair; the tresses, in other words, of the fair sex. Most beautiful specimens of art were the chain and cable lines which the artistic fingers of our hale old friend manipulated, telling, moreover, by virtue of their elasticity, to a nicety, on the strength of a well-conditioned fish; and yet in the use of them the most delicate treatment was essential, and in the laying aside the most particular care, for, with all their capability of tension, they were frail as the lambs they had been shorn from, and retentive as well as absorptive of moisture to a degree which interfered with the possibility of thoroughly drying them within a moderate space of time. To his skill as an angler and getter-up of lines, Monsieur Senebier added a profound knowledge of the mysteries of the *cuisine*, and at a rural inn, lacking every requisite save the frying-pan, ham, eggs, lard, and lean poultry, was invaluable in

the way of concocting, by help of a few pocket-stores, small in bulk, which he usually carried with him, dishes presentable to a prince of the blood-royal. Soyer could not have improved upon his treatment of simples, in the shape of ham and eggs alone, the separate and combined qualities of which had evidently been a matter of intense study to him in a time of pressure; and, talking of Soyer, where got Monsieur Alexis that invaluable receipt, introduced as No. 54 into the ninetieth thousand of his shilling Cookery-Book for the People, anent the boiling of salmon?—‘A salmon weighing ten pounds will take one hour gently simmering, when the water commences boiling. Head and shoulders of six pounds, forty minutes!’ What a process of *reductio ad absurdum* for the king of fishes to undergo! It is more like the treatment of tripe than what is due to a dainty, the curd and complexion of which, its nutritive juices and excellences, are dependent upon careful and tender usage.

To revert, however, to the subject of this chapter, viz., my juvenile experiences as an angler, such, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, are associated principally with the river Almond and its feeder, the Gogar Burn; the Esks, North and South, which discharge themselves as one at Inveresk; their feeder, Glencorse Burn, along with the artificial reservoir situated in the heart of the Pentland Hills, known as the Compensation Pond. I used to commence the season, according to state of tide and weather, sometimes at the mouth of the Almond, and sometimes at the bridge on the Queensferry road beyond Barnton, fishing down with fly, and occasionally with the spinning-minnow. It was seldom, indeed, that I basketed what I would now consider a remunerative quantity of trout; but in those days I felt amply rewarded for my small measure of skill by the capture of half-a-dozen, the largest of them not exceeding nine or ten inches in length. Occasionally, however, in the course of my excursions in that direction, I met with excellent sport, and often had the

satisfaction of killing two or three sea-trout. These, most of them at least, I begin to think must have been kelted or spent fish, although taken within tidemark in the vicinity of Cramond. The higher division of the Almond, near Kirkliston, was also frequented by me; and I have caught trout with minnow and worm in the Union Canal itself, at the point where it is fed from the river above mentioned, not far from the aqueduct.

Before quitting the Almond and Water of Leith, I cannot refrain from giving publicity to a scheme which, I am tempted to think, might, if carried into execution with proper tact and energy, assist not only to adorn the Scottish capital, but to place it and its port on a level, or nearly so, with some of our greatest commercial cities.

My project may be stated as follows:—It is simply to divert the currents of the rivers Teith and Forth from points of elevation selected above Stirling, and, bringing them gradually into association with the Devon, the Carron, and the Almond, discharge the so combined bulk of fluid into the bed, widened, deepened, embanked, and properly prepared for its reception, of the Water of Leith. In the way of doing this there are in reality no great engineering difficulties. As to the expense, it is, as regards cutting and shielding, for there is no levelling to talk of required, absolutely nothing compared to what is usually incurred by the formation and getting up of a line of rail. In respect to the mills and manufactories held in connexion with the streams above-named, the loss likely to accrue to their present proprietors is susceptible of being indemnified by a transfer of water-power, etc., which, holding in view the extent of the cut, would be very considerable; and as to fisheries, I am inclined to regard as practicable their establishment, in course of time, over a channel assisted from so many sources. In fact, in place of the almost exhausted Forth, I venture to predict the substitution of a splendid and well-cared-for salmon-river. The

chief advantages, however, which would result from this experiment—a bold one, I allow—are the embellishment and purification of Edinburgh; the transference of the Firth estuary to the bed of the Water of Leith—a result which is equivalent to the establishment of tidal influences as high up probably as Canon-mills; and, springing from this, the extension of wharfage, the institution of docks, the increased value of landed property in many directions,—the giving, in fact, a commercial importance to the Scottish capital which at present does not belong to her.

### THE ANGLER'S INVITATION.

#### I.

COME when the leaf comes, angle with me,  
Come when the bee hums crossing the lea;  
    Come with the wild flowers,  
    Come with the mild showers,  
Come when the singing bird calleth for thee!

#### II.

Then to the stream-side gladly we'll hie,  
Where the grey trout glide temptingly by;  
    Or in some still place,  
    Over the hill-face,  
Cast, ever hoping, the magical fly.

#### III.

Then when the dew falls, homeward we'll speed  
To our own loved walls down on the mead;  
    There, by the bright hearth,  
    Holding our night mirth,  
We'll drink to sweet friendship in need and in deed!

## ROSS-SHIRE.

My first acquaintance with the rivers and lakes of Ross-shire was formed during a pedestrian tour which dates from 27th June 1835, the starting-point, so far as fishing was concerned, being the river Earn at Crieff. To this river and its tributaries I have already referred; also to the waters, including the Spey, Loch Ness, etc., in which I dipped line on my way. At that date, I may mention, there was little or no hindrance throughout Perthshire and Inverness-shire to angling with the rod for river-trout. The proprietors of the waters themselves rarely interfered with its pursuit, and it was not until shootings and fishings came to be regarded as a righteous source of income that any arrestment was laid upon the wandering will of the pedestrian armed with waving wand among our lakes and rivers. I do not affirm that this was the case everywhere; but in the counties named, with a sprinkling of exceptions which I may take the opportunity of alluding to, it certainly was.

My introduction to Ross-shire, in fact, brought me into immediate contact with an instance of this sort, in the case of the Rasay or Blackwater, in the vicinity of Contin. It was only a portion of it, however,—*that* subtending the Falls of Rogie, and which might be said to consist of a succession of salmon-casts,—that the then proprietor, the late Sir George Mackenzie of Coul, placed his *veto* upon. In ignorance of this state of matters, on coming suddenly upon the river from Strathpeffer, I was about to put together my rod with the view of taking a cast, when I was accosted by a tall, homely-looking man, with a halt in his gait, whom, by his pronunciation of the *you* and *me* (converted into *yow* and *mey*), I had no difficulty in recognising as a native of Selkirkshire. The interchange of a few words served to introduce him to me as an old friend of the Ettrick Shepherd. He

was a brother, in short, of William Laidlaw, the author of 'Lucy's Flitting,' one of the most plaintive of our Scottish melodies, whose connexion with Sir Walter Scott, as friend and secretary, is well known, and who at that time occupied the position of factor to Stewart Mackenzie, Esq. of Seaforth, and resided at Brahan Castle, on the banks of the Conan, four or five miles below Contin.

I had an opportunity, shortly afterwards, of forming an acquaintance with this gentlest and most diffident of men, whose privilege it was to be present with the distinguished novelist in his hours of inspiration, and to commit to writing, as it flowed from his charmed lips, more than one of those admirable fictions which, on the popular shelf, stand side by side, in worthy alliance, with the creations of Shakspeare. The brother whom I met with on this occasion was one of the original introducers of an improved system of sheep-farming and agriculture into the North of Scotland. Judged of by the history, as related to me, of his first struggles, it was far from being a work either of ease or profit. As a pioneer, he had to combat with the avarice and litigiousness brought into play through the straitened circumstances of the land-owners, with the hatred and calumny of a displaced tenantry, those small occupiers or cumberers of the soil, whom Mr. Bright, and along with him my friend Professor Blackie, would wish to see reinstated on Highland territory, and with the prejudices, low cunning, and indolent habits of that class on which he had to depend, in a large measure, for the performance of out-of-door labour.

My conversation with Mr. James Laidlaw, on my introduction as an angler into Ross-shire, gave me to understand the position of the Blackwater as a sporting river, and the peculiar regard in which its salmon-casts were held by the proprietor. Apprised on this score, and not being at all desirous of interfering with those feelings of tenaciousness which it is natural for the proprietor of

such a river to entertain, I deferred presenting a note of request with which I had been furnished, making application in my favour for a day or two's salmon-fishing; another consideration being my want of provision for engaging on favourable terms in that manner of sport, and, I may add, my very limited acquaintance with it at that time. I enjoyed, however, after opportunities, through the kindness both of Sir George Mackenzie and Horatio Ross, Esq. (the latter being lessee of the shootings and fishings of Coul and Craigdarroch in 1844), of judging, when more competent to do so, of the Blackwater as a salmon river, and of forming from it, in that capacity, some views or opinions bearing upon the instincts and fresh-water habits of the *salar*.

In the *Angler's Companion* I have entered pretty fully into the details of sport met with at various times on the Blackwater, and several of the lakes near Contin; and having no intention to interpolate these chapters with a repetition of matter already published, I shall simply state that, on that section of the Rasay which extends betwixt Loch Garve and the Rogie Falls, I caught, in 1835 and 1836, also in 1844, with fly and spinning tackle, several splendid specimens of river-trout. On the 11th of July 1835, out of sixteen fish which graced my creel, two were trout of four pounds each; the next was a three-pounder; the fourth a pound lighter, and three others ranked above the pound. The stretch of water I refer to is of a mixed character, and embraces, along with several dead reaches and pools, a small lake. It speaks at once to the eye to its being occupied by pike as well as trout, containing, as it does, ready shelter in great abundance.

Some rivers and lakes, I have noticed, are liable to singular alternations, affecting their occupaney by the *lucius* and the *fario*. St. Mary's Loch, the Teviot, and the Till, in connexion with Tweed, may be cited as exemplifications of this feature; and I have reason to think, judging from a visit paid to it in 1844, that



the Blackwater of Ross-shire is liable to be affected in a similar manner. The fact of such alternations taking place, by sheer force of nature, as it were, is certainly a curious one, and not easily explained.

As one of our Scottish salmon leaps, the Rogie Falls merit attention; although on a smaller scale, they are quite as picturesque as those of Kilmorack on the Beaulieu. It is chiefly during the months of July and August that the fish are to be seen attempting to climb them. In their endeavours to do so by the main ascent, which is of a considerable height, they never, or rarely, succeed; but a lateral diversion, comprehending two distinct overshoots, separated, the upper from the lower, by a pot or caldron, gives occasional opportunity for salmon to make good their way into the higher range of river. By far the greater proportion, however, of the fish which enter the Rasay, are content merely to try their strength at the main cataract, and on being foiled, to take up their quarters in the rugged shelter subtending it. Thence, as they approach spawning condition, they drop down, and congregate in the slack pools near the village of Contin. From the glebe ground, an island formed by the Blackwater, two miles below the Rogie Falls, there was pointed out to me, by the late George Laidlaw (a knowing salmon-slayer with the spear in his day and generation), one of these assemblages, comprising several scores of black or foul fish, mostly females. The occupancy in a similar manner of the pools in our Border river, preparatory to the actual commencement of spawning operations, is unquestionable. A hundred salmon and upwards have been known to draw together within a small compass, for the purpose apparently of concocting measures preliminary to their appearance in a paired state on the superintending shallows. I have frequently from Kelso Bridge witnessed gatherings of this description.

Reverting to the Falls of the Rogie: such salmon as overcome

them, proceed at once, it is conjectured, through Loch Garve into Strath Vaich. They have never, to my knowledge, been taken by the angler in any portion of the intermediate water. In August 1844, a fine running flood having occurred, I observed several grilises in the act of surmounting a small waterfall near Strath Garve; but, although I persevered a whole day, over a series of pools on both sides of the break, I did not succeed in raising a single fish, their reputed halting-places being five or six miles farther up, or at a distance of ten or twelve from the Rogie Falls. This disinclination in salmon to take up a position or rise at the fly after surmounting some formidable impediment, is illustrated in the case of the Kilmorack or Beaully ascent, and that of Killin, on the Dochart; also, quite as satisfactorily, although not to the same extent, in the case of the Shin Ess, or Linn of Shin, on overcoming which the fish proceed, before resting or settling down, nearly a couple of miles, whereas the Beaully adventurers penetrate at once to the heights of the Glass and Farrar rivers, and the Tay salmon, passing up the falls of the Dochart, take up their quarters near Luib.

The name Rogie, or Roagie, given to this waterfall, applied, not many years ago, to a considerable village in its neighbourhood, now depopulated, and razed righteously to the surface of the soil it stood on. Of all the curses which I can well conceive in connexion with landed property in the Highlands, the greatest is that of a Celtic community of the baser sort. Pride, the pride of name and cousinship, the latter as many degrees removed as might establish for its pretender a claim to the moon when its present occupant neglects to show face; laziness past redemption, and religious arrogance grown to such a height, that it needs but a gloomy, sanctimonious cast of countenance, and a stern, overbearing manner, consorted with the merest smattering of Scriptural erudition, to ride roughshod over the educated pulpit, and usurp its influence and authority—these are but a

few of the evils engendered by the keeping up of small Highland communities. The introduction amongst us of Indians and their wigwams from the coasts of Labrador, will admit almost of as much reason and excuse as does the continuance of these *fungi*, an inbreak upon which has from some quarters called forth such a deal of lamentation and foolish outcry.

Above the Rogie Falls, when I first knew them, there lay stretched a suspension bridge, or rather the remains of one, for its condition was such that it required extreme caution to accomplish a transit by it. The natural forest-land which guards the Blackwater at this point, along with a profusion of crags and undergrowth, gave shelter, among other species of vermin, to the wild cat (*Felis catus*). A happy thought, I recollect it being told me by the proprietor, led to the conversion by his game-keeper of this crazy means of communication betwixt the banks into an apt spot for the setting of traps, wherewith, in the course of a single season, he captured several undoubted specimens of this ferocious animal.

The zoology of the whole district, comprehending the banks of the Rasay, Tarviewood, Craigdarroch, Tor Achilty, and Brahan Forest, is extremely interesting. It embraces many of our rarer quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, and insects. The Tor is a strikingly situated, singularly developed, and finely embellished eminence, which, within its own confines, offers to the naturalist subjects of study, the bare enumeration of which would form a volume. At its base, this hill is fringed richly with natural oak and birch wood, the latter chiefly of the pendent order. Higher up it is girthed with a zone of pine-wood, above which lies a coping of luxuriant heather. The attractions of this hill are greatly enhanced by the union of the rivers Conon and Rasay, which converge below it, and by its relation on the upper side to the fair mirror bearing its name, and the finely diversified ridge, with its leafy screens, its sylvan knolls, and rocky facings

stretching opposite. An attempt was made by me a number of years ago to embody, in the shape of a sonnet, one or two of the leading features of this charming landscape. The sketch is simply descriptive :—

### LOCH ACHILTY.

OF all sweet waters and soul-stirring spots,  
Remote from the contentions of mankind,  
Oftest repictured by my musing thoughts,  
Lies a bright lake among fair trees enshrined,  
Yclep'd Loch Achilty. A heath-grown crest,  
Surnamed the Tor, its eastern guardian stands,  
While Darroch Crag its dream-like screen expands  
Imprisoning the clear wave on the West,  
Bright mimic bays with weeping birches fringed—  
An islet ruin—solitary deer—  
And distant mountains by the sun-ray tinged  
At the mind's animating beck appear ;  
Nor unremember'd in the glowing scene  
Against a moss-grown stone, entranced two anglers lean.

### DEER OF TOR ACHILTY.

TOR ACHILTY is important as one of the nurseries of our Highland red-deer (*Cervus elephas*). Its covers also abound in roes. It is only, however, in the depth of winter, and during the height of the rutting season, that the harts descend in any force from the corries of Ben Wyvis or the wilds of Strath Conon to this comparatively low district. On these occasions they are accused, and not without reason, of doing a great deal of damage to the turnip crops, which are now-a-days, to a large extent, raised in the neighbourhood. The philandering of the stags on the Tor with the hinds, may be recognised at a great distance by their

bellowings; and were they to keep their stately presences within the precincts of the *sanctum*, and simply indulge in their noisy demonstrations of amorous jealousy, there could be no cause of complaint. The sweet juicy bulbs, however, held in reserve by the farmer for the Christmas and Easter fare of his half-breds, prove a temptation not easily resisted by the antlered monarchs. Nor would the agriculturist grudge them their mouthful did they take it in thinking moderation, influenced by some slight sense of gratitude or notion of economy. The lord of the mountains, however, when walking in the track of the plough, is above all this. Sniffing, with lifted nostril, his way to the promised land, he commences, on entering it, his attack, right and left, on the Swedes and purple-tops. From bulb to bulb on he marches, nipping out from each the single savoury morsel, and leaving Jack Frost, who usually presses hard on his rear, to demolish what is left. No wonder the muds are up in arms, and the tiller of the soil swears utter extermination to these cervine invaders.

The state of the law in Scotland is such, it appears, that scarcely any hindrance is given by it to deer-poaching; and unless prevented from doing so by express terms in his lease, the unlicensed tenant of the ground or farm may not only slay deer of the indigenous species, when intruding on his fields, but appropriate the bodies of the animals so slain without incurring one farthing's penalty. The only protection afforded is in the case of the ground being properly fenced in, and made subject to forest and park laws. What is called a forest, however, by this or that Highland proprietor, simply because he chooses so to term and employ it, conveys no privilege as a deer sanctuary, unless enclosed according to terms of Statute. I am acquainted with an instance, in relation to the Coul estates, where the lessee of the deer-shootings failed in obtaining the smallest redress from the tenant of the soil, on the occasion of the latter shooting several hinds when in the act of making free with his standing crop. It

was certainly provoking, but it may serve as a warning to the lessees of deer-shootings in Scotland, to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the existing arrangement betwixt landlord and tenant before they conclude their paction for the venison.

### A LOCH SCENE.

#### I.

NEVER in dream-land met the eye  
A scene so fair and witching ;  
Lake, heath, and forest, hill and dale,  
And, gilding all in its farewell,  
A sunset so enriching !

#### II.

The chasten'd rapture of that hour  
Steals, like a vision, o'er me ;  
I see again the mirror'd heights—  
The tranquil blending of delights  
In the sweet lake before me.

#### III.

A ruin on its islet stands,  
The walls with ivy pendant,  
Its grey stones crumbling underneath,  
Peer coldly through the shroud-like wreath  
Of that untrain'd ascendant.

#### IV.

But glancing from the record rude  
Of the remoter ages,  
Behold the image of a stag,  
Timorous of the water-flag,  
Its eager thirst assuages !

## V.

The stately antlers branching free  
Above its forehead tragic—  
The form of animated grace  
Are kindred to the quiet place,  
A portion of its magic !

## VI.

And there the wild-duck, like a skiff,  
Shoots from her bower of rushes ;  
His glossy neck enamour'd rears  
Her mate, and through the screen of spears,  
Sounding his love charge, brushes.

## VII.

The peerly water-heron, too,  
Where the faint sun-ray trembles,  
Drooping its ever-graceful head  
Above the floating lily-bed,  
A poet-bird resembles.

## VIII.

And yonder, on the distant marge,  
Behold an angler eager,  
With taper wand and arm of skill,  
In shadow of the darkening hill,  
A solitary figure !

## IX.

But, falling from the heights beyond,  
Shadow and mist together,  
Glideth away the silent show—  
The mountain and the lake below—  
The forest and the heather.

## X.

And night, with dewy forehead bent,  
Holdeth its vigil solemn,  
Till the red architect of morn.  
Upon a cloud-car slowly born,  
Erects his amber column !

## THE CONON.

I AM led, passing from the Blackwater, to say something of its recipient, the Conon, a main discharge flowing into the *Portus Salutis*, as the Cromarty Firth was named by the Romans. It was the first of the Ross-shire rivers which I disturbed with my rod, and I did so under the impression a Lowlander is liable to form of this river at first sight, viz., that it abounds in yellow trout. In the portion of its course fished by me on the 8th of July 1835, that which stretches betwixt Muirton and Scatwell, this conclusion, I admit, is not greatly favoured. One or two of the casts, however, promised well ; and as they were in good trim for fly-fishing I was led to expect something satisfactory in the way of sport. On this head, however, I was disappointed ; the result, indeed, of the whole day's labour, for it could not be called amusement, was disheartening in the extreme. The only agreeable incident, that of playing and landing a beautifully formed fresh-water trout of about two pounds' weight, occurred when I was on the point of winding-up line and accepting the pressing hospitalities of the occupant of Scatwell cottage, Mr. Alexander Mackenzie of Millbank, to whom, from a common friend—no other than the late Professor Wilson—I had a note of introduction. In Mrs. Gordon's *Life of the Professor*, vol. i. p. 224, a letter is inserted, bearing upon the circumstances which led to an intimacy betwixt them ; and I well recollect an occa-



sion when Lord Robertson, better known as Peter, was present (and I think De Quincey also), on which some whisky of rare excellence was brought, in the way of a dram, to table at Gloucester Place, christened by the host *Millbank*, in honour of his friend in the north, who had transmitted it. By this kind-hearted, elderly gentleman, I was prevailed upon to remain all night at Scatwell, and try my hand next day on Loch Luichart, which lay about two miles off.

This sheet of water is one of the natural reservoirs through which the leading river, or Conon proper, directs itself. By some perversion, the name Strathconon has been given to the valley of the Meig—a lateral stream of rival dimensions, which, joining the other close to Scatwell, leads up to the heights of Scuirvuilion and the lonely recesses of Glenigag—well-known resorts of the stag at the season when he is most acceptable to the deer-stalker. From where the Meig enters, up to Loch Luichart, about a mile of river intervenes, the nature of which is rocky and impetuous, so much so, that although no really insurmountable barrier, as far as the eye can judge, occurs, the succession of petty cataracts is such as effectually to hinder salmon from entering the lake, and thence attaining the ample extent of breeding-grounds lying unpeopled in Strath-Bran, and along the bed of the Grudie river, leading to Lochs Fannich and Chroisg, the parent lakes, so to call them, from which the Conon draws sustenance. A ledge of obstructions, still more formidable, lies stretched, not far from its mouth, across the Meig, and prevents the free passage of salmon into Strathconon, where the breeding accommodation is also on a large scale.

At the lower end of Loch Luichart, as approached on the north side of the river, the scenery commands attention, being bound up with objects that rarely, in a similar combination, pass under regard. What have specially riveted themselves on my recollection are the remains of a grand old forest,—trunks of trees

which, if not quite so girthy as the chestnuts in Greenwich Park, betoken far greater antiquity, and attract more by their gnarled and singularly contorted appearance. Void of leafy life, in their spectral rigidity they stand out to view more like the fragments of an accursed city, wound about with sleeping hydras and constrictors than what they really are. Turner, it can almost be demonstrated, in his search for the impressive, never hit upon them. Among the many sketches I have seen of his, there is no revelation to that effect; and my friend Horatio Macculloch has as yet not amalgamated their hoary relics with the productions of his pencil. Among some poetical attempts ventured by me, a number of years ago, to delineate portions of our river and loch scenery, I find embodied, in the shape of a sonnet, the following lines. They merely bear reference, without entering into anything like descriptive particulars, to the spot in question.

## SONNET.

THROUGH Luichart's lone expanse dark Conon flows,  
Of moorland nature, as its tawny blood  
Betokens; and insensibly the flood  
Glides onward, while continuous hills enclose  
The quiet lake. At length, this soft repose—  
The siren bosom of the pastoral deeps—  
It rudely spurns, and with terrific leaps  
Descends into the valley. Oft I chose,  
In days bygone, the wild and wizard place  
Wherein to sport, and from the eddy's rout  
Lured with bewitching fly the simple trout.  
This scene hath Time's hand shifted, and its face  
Reft of the life; yet picture-like to me,  
It hangs within the mind's vast gallery.

My first visit to Loch Luichart led me to form a favourable opinion of it as a trouting-loch. I fished it under the disadvantages generally met with in July, viz., a passive state of atmosphere, combined with heat and sunshine. By the help of an occasional ripple, however, I succeeded in basketing two dozen trout, weighing on the average nearly half a pound a-piece. During a residence of some months in the neighbourhood of Contin, I frequently laid this lake under contribution. It took my fancy, as much on account of the scenery by which it is approached, and its own pastoral beauty, as of the sport it afforded. Under a good smart breeze, which chafed the margins, and caused the formation of foam-lines on the surface, an effect which every angler must have witnessed again and again, the trout usually rose well. These lines or streaks, when the wind happens to be travelling steadily up or down the loch (the form of many of our Highland reservoirs admits, in regard to its direction, the use of such terms), hold a parallel relation to the water's edge, and lie at a distance from it, regulated by the marginal indentations, force of air, etc.,—sometimes at an arm's length, sometimes as far from the shore as one can manage to cast. Occasionally, in very gusty weather, when the surface of the water is hit in a particular way, the whole bosom of the lake becomes ribbed over with them; but in this case they are of no telling advantage, whereas, when they are strictly marginal, they exercise an attractive power over the fish, disposing them to look out for surface-food, and approach the water's edge for this purpose. Their doing so is easily explained. The wind, when in a raised state, has at certain seasons a tendency to drive large numbers of the weaker insects from the grassy, heathery, rushy, or leafy banks into the water, alighting on which they are drifted out until they come into contact with one of these foam-lines, which in a manner arrests and holds them in durance. In this way the frothy bands I am referring to serve the purpose of

collecting the natural surface-food of the trout, which are led by instinct to lurk under them. To know this, and to act upon the knowledge, is one of the secrets of the fly-fisher's success in loch-fishing.

Loch Luichart, it is said, contains trout of large dimensions. It may be so, but I never, in the course of my visits to it, came across any of these monsters, the largest trout taken by me not exceeding a pound and a half. The length of this sheet of water is nearly six miles; that of Loch Fannich, which superintends it, being upwards of twelve. The trout of Loch Fannich are small, scarcely herring-sized, a circumstance worthy of notice, seeing that the trout of Strath-Bran, those inhabiting Lochs Achnanault and Ledgowan, attain large dimensions; as also do those of Loch Garve, through which the Blackwater takes its course. Pike, however, I may mention, are established in these lochs—a fact which may account in part for the superior size, as it certainly does for the comparative paucity, of their spotted contents. I find mentioned in my diary, as the result of a day's fishing (17th July 1835) on Loch Luichart and its outlet, forty-six trout. My average take, in the course of ten or twelve visits, ranged from a dozen and a half up to three dozens. Although I had full permission to do so, I was not tempted in 1835, for reasons already stated, to trouble the salmon-casts on the Conon much further than by inquiry. In the spring of 1836 I gave more attention to them, but cannot say that I was greatly impressed in their favour. They are very limited, both in number and extent, considering the size of the river. A substantial-looking cruive-dyke, not far from the confluence of the Orrin, effectually intercepts the progress of the salmon on week-days, and it is only through the Sunday's slap, on the occasion of a *spate*, that seasonable fish of any magnitude can gain access to the upper streams. I recollect being told by the late Sir G. Mackenzie, that the peopling of the Blackwater depended solely upon the

proper observance of the laws of the Sunday's slap, and that it appeared to him the fish became guided by a kind of instinct to take advantage of it. In relation to his rod-fishings near Contin, this remarkable circumstance, he told me, had frequently come under his notice, namely, the capture on the Tuesday, rarely, if ever, on the Monday, of one or more fresh-run salmon, it being ascertained, on after inquiry, that throughout the previous week the fishings with the net carried on below the cruives had been wholly unproductive. In July a good many sea-trout press into the Conon, and, during the remainder of the season, that lively little fish, the finnock or whitling, in its grilse stage, frequents abundantly the lowest division of the river. The Blackwater, probably from its mossy nature, is repellent to this species of the *Salmonidæ*, although it is occasionally taken by the angler from its lower streams.

In the spring of 1836, during the months of February and March, I caught numbers of finnocks in a kelted state near Brahan Castle. Now and then I came across a spent salmon with my trouting-tackle. The 17th of February is marked in my journal as a day passed with Mr. W. Laidlaw, on which, besides landing several finnocks, I had my slight single-handed rod severely tested by two large fish of the above description. It was on that, or a corresponding occasion, that I received, what I have alluded to in the *Angler's Companion*, a memento of some value, viz., a portion of the fishing-tackle stowed away in a drawer along with the original ms. of *Waverley*. It consisted simply of a round-bend hook, No. 10 Adlington, a few brown hackles, and a single length of horse-tail hair, the last-mentioned article being so superior in quality to anything of the kind I ever happened to fall in with, that I never look at it without being reminded of the feat performed by a *quondam* minister of Gala-shiels, a neighbour and personal friend of Sir Walter, who, on the Boldside Water, near Abbotsford, played and landed a newly-

run salmon, under traces made up of single horse-hair ; the idea at the same time presenting itself, that the mislaid packet might possibly have formed part and parcel of the same equine ornament as that from which the reverend angler had constructed his slender foot-line.

On the occasion of my meeting with Mr. Laidlaw, our conversation in the afternoon, over a tumbler of Teannanich or Brackla, mixed to taste, was frequently led by him to Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*. He plainly felt sore on the subject, and that not on account of any neglect or want of the most honourable mention made of him by the literary executor, but because, as the purveyor of much of the raw material, and contributor of numerous interesting anecdotes relating to the great novelist, he had looked forward to the insertion of his communications in the biography exactly as they had been furnished by him, instead of their being presented to the public in a cooked-up state, highly spiced, and rendered acceptable to the popular palate. That Mr. Laidlaw had some reason to be aggrieved, I have no doubt ; but that it was out of the province of one in Mr. Lockhart's position to trick out for favour with the graces of composition, correspondence which, although sterling to the point, was couched, possibly, in more homely phrase than he could reconcile with his own chaste and appropriate style, cannot be admitted.

The still portions of the Conon are infested with small pike. In a by-piece of water adjoining it, I have caught several of these petty marauders. There are lakes in the district, Lochs Ousie and Kinellan, which contain, with the exception of the eel, no other kind of fish. The first-mentioned of these lies betwixt Brahan Castle and Knoek Farril, an eminence celebrated for its vitrified fort, the remains of which are still a puzzle to the chemist, as well as the antiquary. Loch Ousie occupies a considerable area, and is closely encircled with plantations, in which both roe and red-deer find refuge. Water-fowl of various kinds

also breed numerous in the swampy portions of it. Taken altogether, this sheet of water presents a singular appearance, which is heightened by a curious tradition as to its containing the talisman, in the shape of a white stone resembling an immense pearl, by means of which a Highland seer, Kenneth Oure by name, gained insight into future events. Before his death it was pitched by him into the lake, and a prediction uttered that it would be discovered in the stomach of a pike many years afterwards. As an amulet this stone was not without its precedent. Every one has heard of the Lee Penny—a small triangular pebble belonging to the Lockharts of the Lee, in Lanarkshire, which has the reputation of being able to effect most extraordinary cures, and even arrest the progress of pestilence. It was borrowed for that purpose during the last visitation of the plague in England by the inhabitants of Newcastle, a large sum of money having been deposited as security for its return; and such, it is said, was the confidence established in its efficacy, that the borrowers, rather than part with it, expressed a willingness to forfeit the full deposit.

Of the charm-stone of Loch Ousie, I was plainly not destined, in my only attempt on this tenement of the pike, to become the fortunate possessor. Armed with gorge and spinning tackle, I passed over to it one morning, under the grand expectation of doing havoc among the grim guardians of the wondrous gem. Embosomed in a wood, and occupying a circular basin between the heights which divide Strathpeffer from the vale of the Conon, the lake, at first view, quickened both my hopes and my footsteps. Like the stronghold it looked, gleaming in the distance, of some ferocious old *Gedd*, the *primus lucius Scotticus*, girt round with his crusty magnates, and holding council high on affairs of watery empire and lucial aggression. How I hurried on with beating heart, and with the legend, as told me, sounding in my ears; how, without slackening pace, I arranged rod and

tackle, and after threading my way through a monotonous forest of firs, bounded forward to the water's edge, exulting in the idea that I had at length gained a point of attack : all this I well recollect ; but deeper graven on my memory is the disappointment met with on discovering in Loch Ousie one of those expanses which nature has fortified at the margins against all invasions by the wandering angler. Round and round lay a broad band, dense and avenueless, of lacustrine vegetation. There was a tremor also, approaching to bogginess, in the outer rim of the lake, which warned me, like a trespass-board, not to play the familiar. Cunning old Kenneth ! even had I the Seaforth passport in hand, and a skiff at service, I should not, bearing my disappointment in mind, venture again in quest of thy prophetic pike. Yet well I wot thou wert as Thomas the Rhymer, and the Wizards of Oakwood and Merchiston—the philosopher of thy day,—a Celt of soul and spirit, that spoke to the unlearned gapers around thee in the language of allegory. The more reason that I should leave thy pearl of price to the custodiership of Loch Ousie and its surly tenants !

#### LOCH ACHILTY—ITS STICKLEBACK.

IN fishing Loch Achilty in July 1835, I recollect being led to notice the occupation of its margins by small shoals of sticklebacks (*Gasterosteus trachurus*). The lake (that portion of it which fronts Craigdarroch excepted) is evidently of great depth, and closely hemmed in with natural birchwood. To fish it with the fly from the bank is scarcely practicable, so closely set is this leafy drapery. Even where openings occur there is a difficulty, owing to the elevation of its shores above the lake's surface in managing the line properly, and at the same time concealing one's person from the wary eye of the fish. The angler, in short, who looks forward to sport, must be prepared



to wade, and this he can only do agreeably and with safety in summer, along a rim or edging, which admits of his passing knee-deep under the screen or fringe of wood by which Loch Achilty is encircled.

In most of our Scottish lakes this rim or water-level is broad and well defined. It is not to be looked for, of course, where the descent is very abrupt, or where the rocky nature of the shore-line prevents its being raised; but even in the former case, where the action of the wind on the water has been for centuries unrestricted, and there has been free scope all along for the breath of Æolus to play, such levels or terraces are frequently met with. For an illustration, I do not need to go further than St. Mary's Loch, which, notwithstanding that its ascertained extreme depth corresponds with the height of the loftiest hills round about, and notwithstanding that the form and relation of these hills to each other, Bourhope Law and the Coppercleugh in particular, give evidence of a rapid subaqueous incline, is encircled, or nearly so, with a beach or platform of considerable width, partially submerged, which enables the angler to pursue his sport without risk, as if from a level road or highway. The formation of the parallel roads in Glenroy has been satisfactorily accounted for on the same principles. On Loch Achilty, however, owing to its sheltered situation, this littoral margin is barely developed; and as it seldom breaks the surface of the water, one, in order to derive any advantage from it, must wade, and employ, in doing so, no little caution, as a single false step may involve in it a plunge overhead, not to imagine more unhappy consequences.

It was while standing on this sunk margin, employed in enticing, under favour of a light ripple, the trout and charr to the surface, that my attention became directed to the shoals of sticklebacks steering to and fro, in a most familiar manner, close to my legs. These little, well-armed fishes, so famous for their

pugnacity, were divided into small detachments or families, consisting each of about a score of individuals, and having severally their heads or leaders, which were distinguished from the others, as well by their size as by their guiding position in front of the shoal.

The three-spined rough-tailed stickleback, according to Mr. Yarrell, is one of the most common of our British fishes. He assigns it a *habitat* in almost every river, brook, or lake in the kingdom; also in the salt water, and on the whole of the coast-line stretching from the Land's End to the Orkneys. Without disputing Mr. Yarrell's accuracy, or the correctness of his sources of information on this point, I may venture to affirm that there are numbers of our Scottish streams and lakes out of which the naturalist would have some difficulty in extracting even a single specimen. Certainly, in none of the waters with which I am acquainted, lying north of the Grampian range, has this fish ever pressed itself on my observation, as it did in Loch Achilty on the occasion above mentioned. As a substitute for the minnow, which is not found in the eastern division of Scotland north of Morayshire, nor in the western districts north of Loch Awe, I have frequently looked for it, but rarely could detect its presence, except in connexion with ditches or stagnant by-water, —in places, in fact, where it could be of no immediate service to me. Its existence in Loch Achilty I have brought under notice, because it struck me as in some measure singular, and because also there was something peculiar in the movements and habits of the stickleback in that lake which I never saw exhibited elsewhere. Had this little fish been a stranger to me, I could not speak so decidedly as to the peculiarity in question, but it happens to be a finny acquaintance of very old standing, and one which, on Tweedside and elsewhere, I have constant opportunities of falling in with. I recollect it, in my boyhood, living in the ditches of what was called the Nor' Loch, in the heart of Edin-

burgh, below the Castle, now the West Princes Street Gardens. It also existed in the Kirkbraehead Pond, the site of which is presently occupied by Rutland Square. It had, according to the late Dr. Neill, its abode in the Canonmills Loch up to the period of its being drained. It also swarmed in the ditches which lined the Meadows. From this last-mentioned locality, in fact, Mr. Yarrell procured specimens of the *spinulosus*, or four-spined stickleback. The Water of Leith, however, also referred to by Dr. Neill as primed with this fierce little fish, was in those days the favourite resort of the juvenile angler; and I recollect it as a sure hold both of minnows and banstickles, many a brilliant specimen of which I was wont to keep imprisoned in a bottle or water-jug, without being at all aware of the influence of the sexual inclinations in thus adonizing the persons of my puny captives. But it is not my intention to press a further account of the stickleback, or to attempt to engage for it any consideration beyond that of its being an excellent subject for the aquarium. The capability it manifests of enduring restraint and privations adapts it admirably for this purpose. Its habits and instincts are exceedingly curious. The construction of the *nidus*, the jealousy of the males in the pairing season, the transformations in respect to shape and colour which both sexes undergo, assist to make the practical study of its natural history extremely interesting. Moreover, it is a fish as easily obtained almost as the tadpole, the fenny districts of England swarming with it—a circumstance, that of commonness I mean, which, so far from rendering the inquirer into the marvels of creation indifferent, should rather prompt him in his researches, and invest them with a more engaging importance. Of the charr of Loch Achilty, and its peculiar breeding-grounds, I shall reserve what I have to say for a future chapter. The three tarns or lochlets in communion with this singular sheet of water—singular in more respects than one—but particularly so as regards the

circumstance of its having, although well supplied with feeders, no visible outlet, are made mention of, along with the sport obtained in them, in the *Angler's Companion*. In fishing to advantage the charr-loch, I experienced, besides the difficulty arising from the wooded state of its banks and narrow margins, the further drawback on success which calm, sunny weather is the occasion of. The following invocation to the winds was composed by me under those or similar circumstances :—

### THE INVOCATION.

#### I.

OH ! waken, winds, waken ! the waters are still,  
And silence and sunlight recline on the hill,  
The angler is watching beside the green springs  
For the low welcome sound of your wandering wings.

#### II.

With rod all appointed, and ready at need,  
His withe-woven pannier flung down on the mead,  
He looks to the lake from his ambush of trees,  
And sighs for the curl of the cool summer breeze.

#### III.

Calm-bound is the form of the water-fowl fair,  
And the spear of the rush stands erect in the air ;  
And the dragon-fly roams o'er the lily-bed gay,  
Where basks the bold pike in a sun-smitten bay.

#### IV.

Oh ! waken, winds, waken ! wherever asleep,  
On cloud or dark mountain, or down in the deep,  
The angler is watching beside the green springs  
For the low welcome sound of your wandering wings !

In my pedestrian tour of 1835, after having exhausted, as far as I had opportunity, the angling capabilities of the immediate neighbourhood, I left Contin about the 24th of July, and pursued, by a hill route leading from Seatwell, my way to Achnanault. In doing so I fell in with a small loch, the name of which I could very imperfectly ascertain from Celtic lips. It sounded, however, like Badienoch. The ripple on its surface happened to be most tempting, and in spite of the assurance of a native of the district that it contained no trout, I could not resist setting to work over it with rod and fly. Scarcely was my line wetted when the trail-hook was taken hold of, and I had the satisfaction of playing and landing, not the largest certainly, but by far, as respects shape and external colouring, I may add edible condition, the finest specimen of a yellow trout I ever fell in with. From this loch, after extracting two other specimens of the *fario*, which, although far above the average in size, bore no comparison to the one first taken, I proceeded to Loch Huelim, which, as it was represented to contain large trout, as well as pike, I felt desirous to make trial of before nightfall.

Through Strathbran, in its central bearings, it is that the line of road which connects the shores of the Cromarty Firth with the west coast of Ross-shire, proceeds. It is a valley not altogether destitute of scenic attractions; but these the eye which has been recently feasting on the banks of the Conon and Blackwater is very apt to overlook. The presence of several small lakes, however, and of some fine tracts of heatherland, cannot fail to win regard from the angler and general sportsman. My successes with the rod in that quarter were very satisfactory, considering the hurried way in which I was compelled to march over the ground. In one of the lakes, situated betwixt Grudie and Achnanault, I secured, besides others of smaller dimensions, two trout weighing about a pound and a half each. Loch Achin, when I reached it, was wrapt in dusky calm, but there were indi-

cations at the surface of its containing, as well as pike, the maculated race in some abundance. From nets, however, which I noticed stretching across several of its bays, it was plainly at that time in the hands of others than sportsmen. With these engines trout of seven or eight pounds' weight have frequently been captured in this sheet of water.

Diverging from Strathbran at Achnasheen, a road conducts to Loch Roskh, and thence to Loch Maree. Of Loch Roskh, on the 25th of July, I took a peep; but the expectation of getting sport among the sea-trout on the Carron, where I had plenary permission to angle from the then proprietor, the late Mr. Mackenzie of Applecross, prevented me from playing the tempter to its freckled denizens. While proceeding towards Jeantown, I dipped feather in a crystalline expanse near the roadside—Loch Dowal by name. It is a fair, isleted piece of water, fringed with natural wood, but barren, comparatively speaking, of yellow trout. The Carron, which passes through it, introduces, when floods occur, a considerable number of salmon and sea-trout into its shelter-places; and good sport, I am told, is occasionally to be met with now-a-days from its banks. At the time I visited it, the Carron, three miles below Loch Dowal, was crossed by a cruive-dyke, containing one or more traps or boxes; and it was only on the occasion of a very heavy spate that fish could make their way over it. As yet there had been no opportunity for their doing so that season, and such fish as the river contained were restricted to the piece of water extending betwixt this barrier and the sea, which comprised at most three or four angling casts. It so happened that, coincident with my arrival at Loch Carron, a change in the weather, which, throughout the early portion of the summer, had in that quarter been harsh and dry, took place. The air became suddenly mild, and copious showers in the upper valley had the effect of swelling the river, and keeping it in stock, as well as in trim, during my sojourn.

My letter of introduction presented at New Kelso—the name given to one of the farms on an enlarged scale now common throughout the Highlands, and which were set up, the greater proportion of them, and are still occupied by Borderers—secured me a kind reception by Dr. Dickson, the lessee at that time. I had established myself at the inn at Jeantown on the evening of the 26th, but by his pressing invitation, was prevailed to shift my quarters to New Kelso, which was conveniently situated on the river-side, close to the best angling water. One of the freshets I have spoken of occurred during the night; and on the following morning, when I was in the act of making preparations for a cast before breakfast, the report came that numbers of salmon and grilse had been observed attempting to climb the cruive-dyke, and that a pool in front of the house was alive with them.

As already mentioned, the rod, one of Phin's, which I had armed myself with, was a light trouting one, a weapon quite inadequate, both in point of length and power, for the purposes of salmon-fishing. My tackle also was of the delicate order, with the exception of a few fanciful flies, very unartistically worked up on the occasion, out of an assortment of floss-silks, turkey-feathers, etc.; and although I had provided myself with a couple of reels, the run of the larger one did not much exceed forty yards. In short, the enjoyment of salmon-fishing had scarcely been contemplated, and in nowise provided for in my excursion. I was also at that time, I confess, quite an untutored hand in the crowning sport.

Such an opportunity, however, for receiving an initiatory lesson was not to be neglected; and as the insufficiency of my tackle was still to be tested, I felt no reason why I should put into exercise the virtue of self-control. It was quick march with me, therefore, to the water's edge, where, having set up my rod, and to the best of my judgment tricked out the line for favour, I took the stream at knee-depth, for the purpose of

reaching a spot which had been represented to me as the sure hold of a good fish. The water, I well recollect, was in most inviting condition ; and in the pool which I was bearing towards the salmon were disporting themselves, two or three at a time. Owing to the latter circumstance, I was thrown off my guard, it appears, while taking a preparatory cast across the superintending ford—a place not likely to be occupied by resting fish in general, but which has its advantages in most salmon rivers, as a sort of threshold or exercise-ground, where the line may be properly soaked and lengthened, and the hand ‘put in.’

My attention being directed to the scene of animation further down, a sudden arrest which was placed upon my line in its home progress led me to conclude that I had run my fly foul of a submersed rock or stump, and I was in the act of stepping forward to disengage it, when out spun the contents of my reel without check or stay ; the *pas seul* of a newly-run salmon, thirty yards higher up, enlightening me as to the course they had taken. I had shared, however, in the surprise of the moment, beyond recall, and mechanically done that which it is the natural impulse of all beginners in the practice of salmon-fishing to do, namely, to drop, instead of throwing back the rod’s point. The result was the escape of the fish, carrying along with it such a serious amount of line that the idea of being stripped of that article altogether, and left to complete my angling tour without it, flashed across me. I prudently resolved, therefore, not as yet to venture my reserve reel into the contest ; but having assorted the broken line, and rigged it out afresh, I returned to the stream. After a few throws, on arriving at the neck of the pool, I was favoured with a boil, but, in the anxiety of the moment, jerked away the hook, before the salmon, evidently a large one, had time to seize it. The same thing occurred thrice in succession. At length the fish took hold, only, however, to imitate the part of its predecessor, and, leaving me in



the lurch, carry off with it a further sample of my ingenuity in fly-dressing. Nothing daunted, I again set to work, and again and again was similarly dealt with; in short, hook after hook, to the amount of nearly my whole stock, disappeared, before the *furor* which had incited me to this unequal contest wore off, and with a face full of disasters, and nothing in hand but a sorry grilse, I stole back to the house of my entertainer, in whose merry welcome and smoking breakfast cheer I quickly found as fair an amount of consolation as a vexed and discomfited angler could well desire.

Breakfast concluded, I accompanied my host to the pool which subtended the cruive-dyke, where we found the tacksman of the fishings, along with his assistants, engaged in working the long-net. After witnessing two or three very successful hauls, the proceeds of which, in salmon and grilses alone, exceeded two hundred, I resumed my rod, and proceeded towards the mouth of the river, wisely resolving to forego for the present my salmon-slaying inclinations, and content myself, while I had the means and opportunity, with a fling at the white trout. It was not long before I entered, heart and soul, into the spirit of the sport, the fish being plentiful, and in fine humour for rising. There were two pools in particular, neither of them of great compass, which absolutely swarmed with silvery frolickers. I had only, in fact, to lay my fly-cast over them in order to cause a ferment; both trail-hook and dropper being instantaneously assailed. There was more of toying with the fly, however, than actually taking hold of it, in this surface-stir—a circumstance which a further acquaintance with the sport has led me to observe is usually attendant on sea-trout fishing, when pursued close to or over the tideway. My stay at New Kelso extended to four days, during which period I captured upwards of a hundred sea-trout (finnocks and whitlings), running from half a pound up to three pounds in weight; also three grilses.

## P R O S P E C T S.

## I.

THE sea-trout gray  
Are now at play,  
The salmon is up, hurra ! hurra !  
For the streamlets brown  
Are dancing down :  
So quicken the cup, hurra ! hurra !

## II.

The cloud-cap still  
Is on the hill,  
And the showers fall fast, hurra ! hurra !  
But sun and breeze  
Will scatter these,  
So drink while they last, hurra ! hurra !

## III.

We'll start at dawn,  
O'er lea and lawn,  
Through thicket and thorn, hurra ! hurra !  
On merriest limb,  
With rods in trim,  
Come, drink a sweet morn, hurra ! hurra !

Leaving Loch Carron on the 1st of August, I crossed over to Loch Alsh, where, under the hospitable roof of Mr. Macrae, I stayed a couple of days, testing a small hill-loch in its vicinity. Thence, after visiting the falls of the Glomach, I proceeded up Glensheil. The Sheil river, which I had permission to fish over, was in a reduced state ; and the day being a cloudless one, after essaying its waters for an hour or so without success, I passed over, bidding Ross-shire good-bye, into Glen Garry.

## TYNE AND DEVON.

IN the Diary kept by me, I find the river Tyne in Haddingtonshire frequently made mention of. My first rod-in-hand recollections of it, as they may be termed, extend three or four years beyond the record referred to, and are associated chiefly with my school-boy days. They are not altogether devoid of interest. The establishment at which I was placed as a boarder, was located at East Linton, a village lying on the banks of the Tyne, about five or six miles below the county town. It was presided over by a septuagenarian, whose infirm state of health acted as a bar to strict discipline, and gave opportunities to those under his charge, systematically to break through the rules of the dormitory, which was so situated as to allow of an easy escape through its windows into the playground, without alarming the reverend Doctor or his unsuspecting satellites. Of the ten or dozen boys who occupied this range of apartments, four or five were decided victims to the angling mania. The disease, so to call it, gained strength from communication with the villagers, some of whom were looked up to as expert hands with the rod. The attractions presented by the river itself, also, in the shape of large beautifully formed trout, helped to confirm the malady, which grew to such a height, that at least three nights in the week, during summer, became dedicated to stolen excursions along the banks of the Tyne, in the neighbourhood of Hailes Castle or Phantassie; the arrangement betwixt those who shared the pleasure and danger of them, and the inglorious sluggards fain to babble, being, that the spoils (which, let them turn out what they might, finny, furry, or feathery, we had no great difficulty in persuading the good-natured mistress of the kitchen to make ready), should form a common repast on the following evening.

When I look back upon these nocturnal ploys, I feel unwilling to regard them as subjects of extreme censure; they are but passages in schoolboy life, on which the most rigid moralist could scarcely venture to frown; and the recollection of them is treasured up, on my part, with a kind of fond regret, very different from that with which the remembrance of follies or culpable actions is usually consorted.

The execution done on these occasions was just sufficient to keep up one's interest in the sport. Four or five trout a-piece were regarded as a fair average take, but among them a fifteen-inch walloper, the martyr to minnow-feeding propensities, frequently held place. The excitement to persevere, however, was not derived solely from our own successes. Now and then, shortly after dawn, it so happened that we were brought into contact with a master of the art—the king-fisher, as he might appropriately have been termed, of Tyne in those days—by name Rob Ralston, and by profession the village barber. Rob was to Tyne what Bill Rawson was to the Water of Leith, the best conjuror of trout in the county, and as neat a dresser of midge-flies as ever twirled the nippers. Stewart's patterns, now held in such esteem, are simply revivals of the old Lothian persuaders, and have no more claim to originality of design than has his method of worm-fishing. To whom the merit of producing them belongs I do not pretend to say, but they were certainly in vogue at the time I speak of, forty years ago and upwards. An easterly wind occurring in May or June—and no other wind so effectually roused into action the still stretches of Tyne—was sure to bring Rob, armed and eager for onslaught, to the river-side. It became to us quite a treat to watch him on such an occasion; how well he seemed to apprehend the beat he was engaged on, and dexterously brought it to account,—a treat, heightened not a little by his personal appearance, which was none of the most commanding.

At the period I speak of, the public exercised unchallenged the privilege of angling over a large portion of the Tyne, extending from Hailes Castle down to Tyningham, a distance of about six miles. This range of water comprehended a number of excellent pools, in which the yellow trout, besides being numerous, attained a large size. At a spot called the Linn, below the bridge at East Linton, kelts, locally termed *liers*, were occasionally landed, and further down, at the Mill of Phantassie, I have witnessed the capture of well-conditioned salmon.

It is now nearly twenty years since the community at large were interdicted, by a decision in the Supreme Court, from fishing with the rod on the portion of Tyne above mentioned. This decision occasioned at the time a good deal of excitement, which was added to by the circumstance, that, shortly before its enunciation, the public, in the person of the defender, had established a right of way along the banks of the river. This right, however, was construed by the Court into a mere servitude, which, although it had been exercised from time immemorial as an auxiliary to the claims of the angling public, could have no effect in determining them. It was simply a right of way, and, in the strong language of one of the judges, gave no license to the party using it to 'throw a hook, chuck a stone, or even to spit into the water.'

On the strength of this decision, numerous streams in Scotland, which the public at large had been accustomed to fish in without challenge, and to consider free, have been placed in a state of strict conservation by the proprietors on their banks. Such a result is to be regretted, seeing that in many instances the law so laid down was taken advantage of on rivers not coming strictly within its scope. The decision in the case in question, *Ferguson v. Shirreff*, bears solely upon private rivers, one of the grounds of it being that the pursuer was the proprietor of both banks and *alveus*; but it does not, according to that definition, admit of

application to *flumina* on a different footing and of a larger class, of which there are several in Scotland.

Were the principles of the Civil or Roman law, which in this judgment led to the separation of a public right of way acquired by prescription from its presumed corollary (for in that light, up to the date of its deliverance, the right of angling appears to have been viewed), were these principles brought to bear in assorting or classifying our rivers, the result, there is little doubt, would be the legal recognition of a number of them as navigable or public, and in this capacity they would admit the community to the enjoyment of certain privileges in connexion with them, that of angling for river-trout among others. Construed by these principles, all rivers on which Crown charters have been granted, conferring a right of salmon-fishings *cum nave et rete*, so far up as such charters extend, would fall under this class. The distribution of such charters, conferring in many instances a right of salmon-fishings, irrespective of any title in the lands or *alveus* over which it may be exercised, favours the conclusion arrived at. I am, perhaps, stretching the point too far. All that I intended to say was, that it would certainly give satisfaction to the angling community in Scotland to have their interests, if they possess any at all beyond what mere sufferance apports to them, properly defined. Within my recollection, and in our own day, hundreds of miles of river and lake margin, over which the fair rod-fisher, from time immemorial, plied his solitary art unquestioned, have been placed in a state of conservation, to the benefit and encouragement, in too many instances, of the poachers alone.

Of the Tyne, which, by its contiguity to Edinburgh, is rendered important in the eye of the urbane angler, the late Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, in one or more of the sunny numbers of *Tait's Magazine*, gives an interesting account; its claims as a trouting stream receiving from his able pen all the consideration they are

entitled to. That the river maintains its character in this respect I make no question, seeing that its waters are not intruded on to an unreasonable extent by manufactories, and that from its level nature, and that of the country skirting it, it is but slightly affected by draining operations.

My last rod-in-hand visit to this river is certainly not of recent date. I find it jotted down in my journal as having taken place in June 1834, and as embracing six days, only a small portion of each, however, being devoted to angling. The section of Tyne fished over on this occasion takes its course through the Stevenson policy-grounds, which subtend those of Amisfield, the seat of the Earl of Wemyss. It was, even in those days, a strictly preserved piece of water, and plentifully stocked with trout, but it had not the repute of the open ranges immediately below it for the size and quality of its finny inhabitants, a two-pounder forming only an occasional prize, whereas fish of much greater weight used to be frequently taken in the under-stretches of the river. My successes at Stevenson, during the six days spent there, were varied, but the weather being calm and the water still, I had only the evenings to depend on, two of which I find alluded to in my journal, in connexion each with the capture of upwards of a score of good trout. They are of course not worth recounting, except for the associations they hold with a river where the angling public in Scotland were made, for the first time, to understand their position in the eye of the law, which is simply this, that a public right of way, coupled with use and wont in the exercise of it for fishing purposes, and with a right in the fishes themselves before capture, as *res ullius*, gives no title whatsoever to the community at large to angle with the rod.

## THE HOLY WELL.

## I.

WHEN the month is happy June,  
And her horns forsake the moon ;  
When she greets us round and full  
Then we'll haunt the Holy-Well pool ;  
    Where I ween,  
    'Neath willow green,  
Bright swimmers are ever gliding,  
    'Mong the reeds and water-weeds  
They hold their wary hiding.

## II.

Not by moonlight need we tread  
Mossy bank or river bed ;  
No living things 'neath moonlight prowl,  
Save beetle and bat and solemn owl ;  
    As she rides  
    The old trout hides  
All under the still bank deeper,  
    Nor gay fly nor minnow sly  
Can rouse the silent sleeper.

## III.

Rather at noontide we shall hie  
To the Holy Well at the moorcock's cry,  
Ere the bee visits the new-burst flower,  
Or the noon-breeze stirs the bower ;  
    Then the trout  
    Sails round about,  
And under the ozier bushes,  
    Or descries his wing'd prize  
Among the whispering rushes.



## IV.

Then we'll seek the Holy Well,  
Or when eve glides up the dell,  
And the cushat all unseen  
Coos among the larch-wood green,  
Stealing soft  
Along the croft,  
We'll beat the shady water,  
Till to rest, with arm opprest,  
Night turns us from the slaughter.

A portion of the year 1834, extending over nearly two months, was spent by me on the banks of the Devon, in Clackmannan-shire. In its uppermost pertinents, the Devon is as delectable a little stream for the angler who is not too ambitious to swear by, as any which runs through the dominions of our gracious Sovereign; nor, even in the lower part of its course, which is directed through a mineral district, has it become totally denuded of attractions. As a feeder of the river Forth, it is one of those waters from which, were salmon reform carried on with due energy, a considerable addition to the present market supply might be obtained. It presents capacities, at least up to a certain point, for producing fish; and although it can never pretend to an equality with Teith, yet as a lateral stream it is of some importance. In most of our salmon rivers little respect has as yet been paid to the lateral streams, especially to those which enter near the mouth of the main supply. Were proper inquiry made into their bearings in this respect, it would be found that they are of wonderful service, particularly in the raising of sea-trout. Take, for instance, the Earn in its connexion with the Tay; and the Whitadder, Till, and Teviot, the furthest down tributaries of Tweed, in their connexion with that river. It is an undisputed fact that the minor species of salmon,

the *eriox* and *albus*, exhibit, when they have the opportunity, a strong hankering in favour of the above-mentioned accessories, preferring the lateral to the direct course ; whereas the *salar*, or true salmon, gives preference, as a general rule, to the main or leading stream. It is also worthy of notice, as illustrative of the habits and instincts of the sea-trout, that this disposition in favour of the lateral forms a distinctive feature in the whole course of its approach towards the breeding grounds. Thus, after having entered the Earn, and pushed up as far as Comrie, it again deserts the direct, and hugs a lateral water, viz., the Ruchil, leading towards the recesses of Glenartney ; so also in the case of Till, it forsakes the direct course for that of the Bowmont, and, guided by the same instinct, abandons Teviot for the Kale, Jed, Ale, Rule, and Borthwick ; Whitadder for the Dye, etc., etc.

With the capacities still possessed by it of being restored to the list of salmon rivers, on which it formerly flourished, the Devon at present possesses little or no claim to that distinction. When I first knew it, it enjoyed the repute of being visited, as far up as the Cauldron Linn, by summer stragglers, and in the pairing season by black fish. One stream in particular, not far from the village of Dollar, at the Vicar's Bridge, was supposed to be rendered attractive to spawning salmon on account of its connexion with a mineral spring or dropping well, the water of which, iron and sulphate of alumina predominating, is powerfully astringent.

A portion of the valley through which the Devon or Dovan flows has been termed the Arcadia of Scotland. The scenery it presents is unquestionably of a very picturesque description. There are fine combinations here and there of the sylvan, the pastoral, the fluvial, and the arable. There are slopes and summits, grassy and heathery ; rocks of commanding altitude ; glens, waterfalls, and all the other essentials of inviting land-

scape, in abundance. There are ruins also; and what can be more imposing in that respect than Castle Campbell, frowning down from its site of strength on the Hill of Gloom, and carrying back the tide of thought to the Lords of Lorn, and the devastating marches of Montrose; and in addition to these memorials of the past, there are modern structures, tastefully got up and harmoniously disposed; nor has our national bard failed to celebrate, and that in one of his sweetest melodies, the 'clear winding river,' and the fairyland through which it glides. But to talk of it as the Arcadia of Scotland is to place Glen-Devon in a somewhat invidious light, and assume for it a position in our romantic land not justified by the laws of ordinary taste.

Out of the two months passed by me in 1834 on the skirts of the Ochils, thirty days are recorded in my journal to have been devoted to the water-side. The weather, up to the first or second week of August, appears to have been characterized by severe droughts, and, in consequence, was unpropitious for fly-fishing. I find before that period no entries made of any consequence. On August 13th, and following days, a change of weather having taken place, the contents of my basket became more in unison with the expectations I had been led to form of the Devon as a trouting stream—the average takes running from four up to five dozen.

From Dollar, downwards to its junction with the Forth, two or three miles above Alloa, the Devon pursues a sluggish course, and the angling is very indifferent. A salmon-cast formed by a bend or sharp turn near the head of this stretch presented almost the only enlivening feature thirty years ago. Its reputation, even then, was on a doubtful footing. Betwixt Dollar and the Linn there are plenty of small river trout, to which the rocks and brushwood give more than ordinary security. The parrs, also, are pretty numerous in this quarter, but have never, in any one properly certified instance, been taken above the falls, or

terminus of the salmon way. I have observed, in relation to them, the same hold good on every river I am acquainted with, similarly circumstanced. But the question as to the parrs being the young of the salmon is quite sufficiently determined by the Stormontfield and other experiments, without the necessity of accumulating evidence as to their fresh-water *habitats*, in reply to the bare assertions of a few prejudiced observers.

The character of the Devon for a mile and upwards above the Cauldron Linn renders it more inviting to the lover of the picturesque than to the angler. The river is so hemmed in with rocks, some of which exceed eighty feet in height, and so shrouded in copsewood, as to preclude all possibility of commanding it with the rod. Above the Rumbling Bridge and Devil's Mill it is more accessible; and at the turn called the Crook presents the qualifications, which are retained up to its sources, and shared in by its different feeders, of a good trouting water. To this, the uppermost section, I could always resort with complete confidence, as containing numbers of trout which, although by no means large, are, when in season, lively and well formed. Once only in the course of a short excursion from Perth, had I the good fortune to come upon it when in first-rate trim for fly-fishing, and to do execution among a class of trout superior, in point of weight, to those usually met with by the surface skimmer in July and August. Instances of a more modern date than that of the period I look back to are on local record, of very large trout being taken by the rod on this stretch of the Devon. Among these, one of seven pounds, and measuring in length twenty-two inches, holds place. It has been affirmed that trout of the Loch Leven species or variety are occasionally caught in this river; and their appearance has been accounted for in the connexion which in very wet weather is said to be formed at the sources of the Queichs or the East Gairney—feeders of the Loch, with rivulets or drains discharging themselves into the Devon.

The explanation is reasonable, and the circumstance of such a means of communication being made available by spawning fish is not without its parallel. In the case of the river Clyde, several miles above the insuperable Falls of Corra-Linn and Stonebyres, the *Salmo eriox* of Tweed, in its kelted state, has been caught more than once. Its fry have been so very frequently. One of the cuttings—for there are two by which these trout pass over—was pointed out to me by the Rev. Mr. Proudfoot of Biggar, in his younger days an enthusiastic angler and accomplished naturalist.

While summering on the banks of the Devon in 1834, I occasionally, armed with pike tackle, took a stroll over to Gartmorn Dam, at that time considered the largest artificial lake or reservoir in Scotland, covering a surface of more than 160 acres. It was constructed, under the direction of the then Earl of Mar, a celebrated engineer in his day, in 1700, for the purpose of supplying the manufactories and colliery at Alloa with a permanent sufficiency of water-power, the steam-engine not having as yet come into play. Shortly after its formation, Loch Leven and other varieties of trout were introduced into it, and are said to have thriven satisfactorily for nearly a century. Unfortunately, a pike stock was added, accompanying the increase of which, a gradual diminution in the numbers of the trout took place. At the time of my visits to Gartmorn, the starry sides, in fact, had become extinct, and I was not even so much as encouraged to try for them by the report of a survivor having been seen in surface-kissing humour near its margins. I played the avenger of their fate, however, to some purpose, slaying with the rod, in the course of two or three visits, nearly a score of pike, my youngest brother, who accompanied me, doing similar execution. In a small burn, called the Black or South Devon, connected with this dam, we also caught, on the occasions mentioned, a considerable number of trout. My reminiscences of trout-

fishing on the Devon and its vicinity bring to mind a friendship formed with that most diffident but accomplished scholar, unambitious but genuine poet, and amiable man, Professor Tennant, author of *Anster Fair*. He was at that time, shortly before his promotion to the Chair of Oriental Languages in the University of St. Andrews, connected, as a classical teacher, with the Dollar Academy, and the occupier of a snug retreat on the banks of the Devon. Although labouring under a malformation of his lower limbs, which debarred him completely from engaging in out of door amusements, in his heart and its sympathies he was a thorough sportsman. His eye kindled, there can be no question, with enthusiasm at the bare mention of Homer and his heroes ; but the same fire passed into and dilated it when the discourse turned upon exercises in the field and by the river-side. It was his declared joy to be transported out of the sober arm-chair, and away from the weary crutch and dizzy folio, into those free places which the eagle has not yet forsaken, where the stag lifts its antlered head, and the salmon, schooled among the buffeting waves of ocean, tries his strength with the cataract. All honour to his memory !

## THE LINNS OF GLEN-DEVON.

### I.

O'ER the linns of Glen-Devon the dense wood hangs crowded,  
While unseen whirl the waters below ;  
'Mid spray and thick foliage, an angler enshrouded,  
Waves his wand—waves his wand to and fro.

### II.

In the linns of Glen-Devon, from deep crevice stealing,  
The hungry trout watches his prey,  
And when 'mid the white foam some stray fly lies wheeling,  
Slyly bears—slyly bears it away.

## III.

Alas ! among morsels, the sweetest and rarest  
That float down the streams of the brake,  
Deceits ever mingle, in colours the fairest,  
Capturing those — capturing those who partake.

## IV.

'Tis thus in this bright world, at joys without measure  
Unheeding we ardently spring,  
And forget that oft hid by the plumage of pleasure  
Lies a hook—lies a hook in the wing.

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ST. RONAN'S CLUB.

THE year 1828, although not that of my introduction to Tweed and Teviot (I had frequently troubled these rivers and some of their tributaries before that period), is distinguished in my journal as the one on which I became acquainted with the Ettrick Shepherd, a zealous angler as well as poet. About this time the village of Innerleithen, on Tweedside, was selected as the theatre of certain annual sports designated the St. Ronan's Games; their celebration, under that title, in the locality mentioned, being intended as a token of respect to the matchless magician who had established and made world-wide the fame of the great border valley and its athletic 'indwellers.' To this centre of attraction resorted many of the champions and aspirants, laurelled and unlaurelled, among the gymnastic clubs in Scotland. The names of those who distinguished themselves on its boards, as throwers of the heavy and the light hammer, as putters of the stone and cannon ball, as quoiters and runners and leapers, have the

greater number of them passed from my recollection. Some, however, retain a firm hold upon it, and I feel a pleasure, mingled with sadness, in recalling them. There was Adam Wilson, for instance, of the Six-foot Club, the prince of hammer-throwers, whose fine manly figure was surpassed on the field only by that of the illustrious patron of athletic sports whose surname he bore, and who, on several successive occasions, by common consent, directed the games and presided at the crowning festival. There was his rival Scougal, the Innerleithen ox-feller, whose brawn and muscle, broad shoulders and sinewy hand, drew admiration and envy from many a rustic onlooker. There was H. G. Bell, the senior Sheriff-substitute of Lanarkshire, another of the chieftains among the six-footers, formerly the getter-up, editor, and mainspring of a periodical now defunct, but once highly popular, yecept *The Edinburgh Literary Journal*, to which, in the days of its prosperity, I enjoyed the honour of occasionally contributing.

H. G. B., although we have but rarely, and on most mournful occasions met these many years back, I recall thee to my recollection as one with whom I communed much in youth. Often I have thought of thee as the earnest-souled aspirant after fame, the bearer of the banner whose motto is *Excelsior!* How laboriously thou toiledst in the field of literature! How candidly, discriminately, and disinterestedly thou performedst the critic's part, thyself an author, historian, and poet, of no mean repute! But, above all, I associate with these musings the filial and fraternal impulses which urged thee onward from boyhood, and made thy path towards fame a path of love and of duty. That thou didst well in the abandonment of a course which, ere this time, might have crowned thee with immortal bays, I judge not; but never against the *deliciæ* of authorship—the grand independence of thought, native to a career in literature, wilt thou affect to back the doubtful pleasures, I shall not call them vexations,



of the judicial office ; never wilt thou compare the dry handling of musty precedents in law, and the determination of petty contentions, to the exercise of the higher intellectual powers and that strife of thought which ennobles all who engage in it !

In the border games H. G. B. excelled as a quoit-player. He took part also in the foot-races with the men of speed ; among whom shone conspicuously the flying tailor of Ettrick and the then celebrated Samuel Nibbs. As a fishing competitor, angling being among the sports encouraged by the St. Ronan's Club, he never, as far as I can recollect, presented himself. The fishing meetings were held apart from the general summer gathering, in May and October. Attendant on them there was always a select, but, numerically speaking, not a strong muster of members. It comprised a bevy of anglers, several of whom were, in their day, the pride and prime of our craft. As a fly and minnow fisher, foremost in rank stood W. Macdonald of Powderhall, one of the keenest and readiest sportsmen that ever waved a wand or handled a fowling-piece. As a proof of his skill in the use of the rod, I may mention that, on one occasion, when we were angling together on the Teviot, he encreed betwixt eleven A.M. and five P.M. the enormous weight of fifty-seven pounds of common river-trout ; the part of the river from which these were taken, running through the heart of a poaching district. Second, perhaps, to Powderhall, ranked the then secretary of the club, Robert Boyd of Innerleithen, and David Thorburn, Juniper Bank. Sam Nibbs, too, and Scougal were but a short way behind them. Had the competitions been fixed to take place in June or July, Sam would, no doubt, have beaten the whole of the entrants put together ; for he was, unquestionably, their master at worm-fishing in clear, sunny weather, and up to all the dodges connected with this branch of the art. In a contest held in October 1828 for the salmon medal of the club, the Ettrick Shepherd was the successful competitor. The only fish, in fact, produced on

that occasion was a twenty-pounder slain by the bard. The story of its capture, related by himself, was as follows: It was taken opposite Holy-Lee, three miles below Innerleithen, with a borrowed rod furnished with gear of the homeliest description. On the fish being hooked, the reel, after a few turns, refused to let off line, in which predicament the Shepherd was compelled to trust entirely to the strength of his tackle. Strong it fortunately was, and goading as well as powerful were the barb and bend of steel in the mouth of the salmon; so much so, that under their irritating pressure the fish performed a series of desperate evolutions, which ended in its throwing itself high and dry upon a bed of gravel close to the angler, who, it may be imagined, was not quite so overcome by astonishment as to allow its return to the river.

Independent of those who found leisure to engage in its fishing contests, St. Ronan's Club numbered among its members many anglers of skill and renown not so favoured. In this capacity my friend H. G. B. deserves mention. He was originally one of the Waltonian school of rod-fishers. Old Izaak formed the grammar-book of his acquisitions. He had studied him thoroughly, stored up his quaint advice, and committed himself to the charm of his fascinating simplicity, in the impression that this was an essential part of the training of the craft. Among the qualifications which led him to do honour to his instructor, the Sheriff was possessed of an indomitable amount of perseverance. I have known him, hour after hour, hold on, in prospect of a glorious nibble, under circumstances so inauspicious, that none but a real enthusiast would have braved them. It was of such unflinching and sportsman-like materials that our friend was made, the right stuff in the main, to work with. Many a time, in my recollection, did the sluggish Leven (outlet of the far-famed Loch whose castellated island is associated with the misfortunes of Mary Stuart) carry on its surface the tall shadow of her zealous

apologist, intent, not on the elucidation of some historic question, but on the swerve and bearings of his float or top-piece which, in that water of dearth, so rarely indicated the toyings of a trout or finnock with the worm it superintended. A stolen march, once or twice in the course of the twelvemonth, to the Eachaig in Argyleshire, or other river in the same quarter, is, I am told, all that survives in evidence of an affection buried, like the regards of literary fame, once so active in his heart's heart, under the pressure of professional expediency.

Prominent among the anglers connected with St. Ronan's Club was its chieftain and ruling spirit, whose 'wildly regal countenance,' as it has been termed, would have formed an appropriate frontispiece to the records of a more chivalrous age than the one he lived in. By all who recollect Professor Wilson in those days, and they were those of his intellectual manhood, the felicity of this descriptive expression will be fully apprehended. On the brow, unadorned by art, there seemed ever to rest a crown of majesty, which, at times, when the imagination was at work within, dilated, so as to form a luminous halo recognisable to the eye of sense, and indicative of his privileged communion with the world spiritual. Artists and sculptors by the dozen have in vain attempted to depict these rapturous trances or moods of inspiration as they seized upon and illuminated the features of this great and gifted man. I have scanned the representations of the best of them, of Raeburn, Watson Gordon, Duncan, Lauder, Fillans, and Steell, but the living material, as it was wont to be kindled up by the ideal element, has passed away from us unrepresented. The breadth and massive grandeur of the brow, the flash and fire of the eye, combined with the quivering of the eloquent lip and lion-like nostrils, are but feebly brought back to our recollections in the works of the pencil, the etching-tool, and the chisel; in the portraits, engravings, and busts which remain to perpetuate what he appeared

when moving among us. But to such failures of the artist and the sculptor, and they are not so much failures of the art as of the opportunity, for it is with likeness-taking as with landscape-painting, there are rare and telling moments which to seize on for execution, festival occasions, as it were, when the glory of the subject becomes manifest—to such failures let me not add any attempt to portray with the pen those features in his poetical and philosophical career which gave chiefest dignity to this illustrious Scotsman. It is only in his capacity as an angler that I hold it within my province to introduce him to the reader, and having had opportunities to judge, can speak pertinently. Strictly speaking, Christopher North was no disciple of old Izaak's. I don't think he ever killed a chub, carp, or jack in his life, or handled, save as a boy, in their capacity as baits, worm or minnow. He was purely, following his own bent, a fly-fisher, and that for river and loch trout. Salmon-fishing, as is usually practised on Tweedside, he was not conversant with; his love of independence leading him to reject, as drawbacks upon sport, the presence and assistance of the fisherman, boat, gaff, etc., reckoned so indispensable on many of our salmon-rivers; but I make no doubt that the feat of playing and landing the lord of fishes was often accomplished by him with the trout-fly and the finest of tackle. I had the gratification of being present, some years ago, on one of these occasions. It was on the 30th of April 1839, on the stream 'betwixt the Caulds,' as it is termed, a portion of Tweed belonging to the Rutherford Casts. The handling of this fish, a seven or eight pounder, by the Professor, was, as a specimen of delicacy of perception in its connexion with the sense of touch, unexceptionable. Many of the most experienced anglers are deficient in that faculty which enables them to play a fish without ceding to it a single jot of their control over its movements, or, on the other hand, without neglecting to humour these movements, in accordance with the

nature of the stream, the elastic properties of the rod, the size of hook, and the strength of the tackle employed by them. They want in their desired combination those powers which can decide at once upon the degree of resistance they are justified in offering. The proper management of a large trout or salmon on slender tackle, when there are hazards to encounter, is as much an art, and as capable, so viewed, of being improved upon as any of the allowed arts,—for example, the art military. To approach perfection in it, practice is no doubt required; but practice goes only a certain length. A natural aptitude is essential to boot. This aptitude lay with Christopher North. You saw at a glance that his superiority as an angler was at one with his genius as a poet and philosopher. To bring it into comparison with the skill of an every-day practitioner, one of those pretenders so often met with, whose sphere of action has been solely confined to his native stream, is not the legitimate way of testing this superiority. To such a vaunter, any exploit with the rod performed away from this arena, forms the subject of a sneer, and is listened to with impatient incredulity. He refuses to believe, in the fullness of his conceit and ignorance, that there is room for skill elsewhere than at his own doors, or that it can be acquired without his advice and special superintendence. For one, an entire stranger, to appear armed with a rod and assert his independence as an angler, would be considered the height of presumption. Any degree of skill such a one may exhibit is slightly spoken of, and put into comparison with some traditional capture, accomplished on this or that pool, three-fourths of a century back. I don't know how it was, but until I came to mix with the rod-fishers in a certain vexed district of our Borderland, I always fancied that a kindly feeling prevailed among anglers. No doubt, this notion met primary encouragement from the beautiful pictures of the fisher's life drawn in the pages of old Izaak; but it was aided, and on the point of being

confirmed by what I experienced at the outset of my career as an angler. Every reminiscence connected with these experiences tends to assure me that there existed a bond of affection, fraternal in its nature, among the saunterers by the streams, a sympathy such as holds among those who have been comrades together in some glorious campaign ; nor am I entirely disabused of this idea, although I must confess it does not present itself with the same force as formerly.

## S O N G.

## I.

WHILE others are brawling, let anglers agree  
And in concord the goblet replenish ;  
Should contention prevail, then away on the gale  
All mirth and hilarity vanish.

## II.

No strife we'll allow, no clamorous words  
To sever the friendships of summer,  
But hand within hand, in amity stand  
And consign every wrong to the rummer !

## III.

Oh ! Peace and Content are the angler's best wealth ;  
No journey without them he ventures ;  
Like angels, they wait at the porch of his gate  
And greet him again when he enters.

## IV.

Then joyously mingle the soul of the grain  
With a sober supply from the tankard ;  
'Twill cost not a care, so long as we share  
The cups of content and of concord !

## THE ANGLER'S FLY-STOCK.

A MASTER in the art, Christopher North soared loftily above the conceits and prejudices of contemporary anglers. He was decidedly of the old Scottish school, and despised the pedantry of linking too closely entomological science with the fabrication of the artificial trout-fly. His ideas on this subject, I have reason to believe, harmonized with those expressed in an article on angling in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which emanated from the pen of his brother, the late James Wilson, F.R.S.E., a much-esteemed author and naturalist, as well as a high authority on the subject of fly-fishing. His voyage in the Government yacht, the 'Princess Royal,' round the coast of Scotland, in company with the late Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, embraces the relation of several fishing-excursions, in all of which his views as to the construction of a killing artificial fly were adhered to and successfully followed out. The theory advanced by Mr. Wilson amounts simply to this, that with three or four combinations of feathers, dubbing, and silk, adapting the size of the hook and quantity of material used to the state of water, atmosphere, etc., you may, throughout the season, on any river or loch in Scotland, secure as good sport as you would with the most approved imitations of the natural insect. Such combinations, for instance, as the woodcock-wing and hare-lug, a red or brown hackle winged with the well-known speckled brown feather taken from the back of the mallard; and a black hackle, either wingless altogether, or else furnished in that particular from the starling, snipe, or landrail, may be adduced in illustration. I am aware that a reduction of the fly-stock to so limited a compass would not meet with much favour, or gain any great amount of confidence, on the banks of many of the rivers in the south of England. I am also aware that there are trout-streams of

considerable celebrity, to fish which with success it is necessary, not perhaps to throw one's-self implicitly into the hands of Ronald, or study entomology by the yard, but to acquire some knowledge of the water-insects which, at stated periods, abound in the locality, and form the favourite food of the trout. Imitations of these insects, under such circumstances, constitute a valuable addition to the fly-stock of the angler; indeed, even when it is not absolutely necessary, we feel inclined to admit them to a spare compartment in the pocket-book, on the score simply of their forming an embellishment to its contents, and gratifying a natural fondness for variety, shared, to some extent, by all anglers. I have always subscribed, however, as far as our Scottish rivers are concerned, to Mr. Wilson's opinion; and it is the opinion of an eminent naturalist, as well as of an excellent angler, that the efficiency of a fly-stock does not depend upon any relation which its individuals bear to this and that species of natural water-fly, but upon their general resemblance to forms of insect life.

A similar contempt for anything like an entomological arrangement in the making up of a fly-stock was entertained by the Professor, and has been expressed by him in the course of his admirable articles on angling embodied in *The Recreations of Christopher North*. This dissent, however, from the theories supported by Ronald and Carroll, the former of whom introduces to us upwards of fifty water-flies, with their imitations; and the latter, a Scottish authority, in his angler's *Vade Mecum*, describes and illustrates, by coloured representations, no fewer than 195 winged insects, native, many of them, to Tweedside, does not imply the rejection of such combinations of feather, silk, dubbing, and tinsel, as have been ascertained to attract trout and provoke to their seizure. Accordingly, the recognition of a standard list of killers cannot be held as inconsistent with the views now reiterated, nor does my exemplification of a



ground-work for an efficient fly-stock commit me in practice to such combinations, and no others, as I have recommended.

On Tweedside, in the neighbourhood of Kelso, a standard list of artificial trout-fly has gradually been elaborated, in the hands of John Forrest and Son, and James Wright of Sprouston, unquestionably the best fly-dressers in Scotland, if not in Great Britain. About twenty years ago, scarcely any of the flies in this list were regarded as imitations of insects, or had been dignified with names which, although not strictly speaking entomological, implied that the artistic productions bearing them were representations, in their place and season, of certain natural insects. Of the very few so distinguished, what is termed the **March Brown** was one, and the **Green Drake** probably another. But the generality of flies in the catalogue were not then characterized as resemblances to any known water-insect, ephemeral or otherwise, beyond the occasional application of such vague terms as midges, gnats, spiders, and palmers. They were named sometimes from the material of which they were chiefly composed, or from a prevailing colour or other peculiarity pertaining to it. For instance, the terms red, brown, or black hackles, harelugs, duns, and white-tips, were understood to be sufficiently descriptive of certain standard flies. The names of individuals, also, in whose hands a particular combination of materials and colour had proved disastrous to the finny tribe, were wont to be assigned to others of our artificial lures. As an example of this, away from any fixed locality, I may cite **Hoffland's Fancy**. The angler now-a-days, however, is not content with such homely and characteristic appellations, but must frame, even in regard to the old-established lures which bear them, some excuse for introducing an entomological arrangement, and for subjecting them to the control of a theory which experience teaches is incorrect, a few exceptional cases forming its only ground of support.

In the making up of a working or efficient fly-stock, the grand

desideratum is simplicity, which one can never arrive at by swelling it out with imitation after imitation of those countless forms of insect life which disport themselves, three-fourths of the year through, on the surface and banks of our trout-streams. A well-reputed and properly tested artificial fly, even although it has no feature in common with what it may have originally been intended to represent, should always, on the ground of its services, be held in consideration by the angler. It was on this principle that the Professor favoured the realization of a fly-stock, upon which to depend for sport, anywhere and everywhere, throughout Scotland.

As the medium, to a limited extent, of getting it up, I was honoured a few years before his death with a request to select, or rather give an order for, and superintend the dressing of a gross of artificial trout-flies, which should comprehend most of the specimens approved of on Tweedside. As an expert and ready hand, I employed James Wright of Sprouston, describing to him by the assistance of his specimen-book what was likely to give satisfaction. In point of variety, my selection was limited to a dozen sorts or thereabouts, two or three sizes of each, ranging on the Adlington scale from No. 0 up to No. 7 or 8. There were comprised in it the spring-flies, white-tips, and the three varieties of March-brown; black, red, dun, partridge and grouse hackles; peacock-tail, fur and silk bodies, with their appendages in the shape of wing, taken from the woodcock, starling, mallard, landrail, lark, etc., etc. This selection, with which the late Professor expressed himself highly pleased, was, I have reason to believe, shortly afterwards drawn upon and put to the test on the Dochart near Luib, and Loch Awe, not far from Port Sonachan. The results are recorded in his own words in the Memoir of his Life by Mrs. Gordon. It was the last occasion on which the sporting jacket of this great and gifted man, an athlete in body as well as mind, was donned, or his magical wand waved over terrestrial river.

A single word as to the fly termed the 'Professor,' so much run upon at one time in Edinburgh. There is a story, afloat of its origin, which, although I cannot positively affirm that it came to my ears through a very direct channel, I feel inclined to give credit to. It is simply this: that on the occasion of a pedestrian tour, rod in hand, through the Highlands, shortly after his marriage, and in company with Mrs. Wilson, the Professor's stock of loch flies running short, he had recourse to the decorating of a bait hook with floral spoils; the yellow of the butter-cup, or other golden ornament of the meadow being employed to disguise the shank and tit-bits of a brown grass blade or leaf made to serve as wings. The success met with by means of this contrivance led, I have been told, to the invention of the fly in question, which is also designated 'Yellow Mantle;' a lure, the persuasive virtues of which I have often availed myself of on our Highland lakes, where it is more readily accepted than on Tweed or Teviot, in their usual transparent conditions. I look upon it, in fact, as 'a fail-me-never' on the Ross-shire and Sutherland waters, not to mention those of Argyle, Perth, and Inverness.

## THE FAIRY ANGLER.

### I.

"TWAS a bland summer's eve when the forest I trod ;  
The dew-gems were starring the flowers of the sod,  
And 'faire mistress moone,' as she rose o'er the heath,  
Threw her spells of chaste light on the landscape beneath.

### II.

I pass'd by a brook where her silvers lay flung ;  
Among knolls of wild fern, it witchingly sung ;  
While a lone fairy angler, with glimmering hand,  
From the thyme-laden banks waved her delicate wand.

## III.

In silence I gazed, as with eager intent  
O'er the musical waters she gracefully bent,  
And plied with green rush-rod, newly torn from its bed,  
Her line of the thorn-spider's mystical thread.

## IV.

A pannier of moss-work her shoulders bedeck'd,  
The nest of some song-bird the night-winds had wreck'd,  
Slung round with a tendril of woodbine so gay,  
And a belt of pink flowers bound her elfin array.

## V.

No snow-flake e'er dropt from its cloud on the brook  
So gently impell'd as her moth-plumaged hook ;  
The pearl-sided parlet and minnow obeyed  
The magical beck of that wandering maid :

## VI.

And aye, as her rush-rod she waved o'er the rill,  
Sweet sounds floated round her—I treasure them still—  
Tho', like a bright moon-cloud resolved into air,  
Pass'd from me regretted, the vision so fair.

## FAIRY'S SONG.

No zephyr shakes the leafy, leafy tree ;  
The round merrye moon looks in on me,  
Through the greene-wood cover,  
Where all summer-night over,  
My angle and I bear companye.  
I have haunts by the lone hill-cairn,  
There I trip it the spring-time thorough,

Under the fronds of the opening fern  
Where the blind mole rears its furrow.  
I have haunts by the shell-strewn tide,  
But dearer to me the river-side ;  
Where, all summer-night over,  
Neath greene-wood cover,  
My angle and I bear company.

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### ST. MARY'S LOCH.

ST. MARY'S LOCH and Tibby Shiels ! Lone St. Mary's every reader of the Border Minstrelsy, and of Wordsworth and Hogg, every lover of pastoral scenery knows well. It is but a step from the Sutor Burgh to where Ettrick and Yarrow, the sister streams of the Forest meet. Both are beautiful, but Yarrow, above where they blend, surpassingly so. Its banks are adorned with a spontaneous fringe of alders and birches, above which, crowding the knolled slopes on either side, wave oaks, elms, planes, limes, beeches, ashes, larches, and Scotch firs, in well-blended profusion. Connected with this strip of valley-land, the utilitarian processes of agriculture are here and there being carried on, but so as to gratify, not offend the eye of taste ; the crowning heights exhibiting by turns the triumphs of arboricultural science, the obduracy of nature, and that reserveful spirit which leads to the harbouring and nurture of those persecuted children of the mist, yclept grouse and black game.

Ettrick, as you recede from the range of associations connected with the mills and manufactories, is perhaps just as engaging after all. Oakwood Tower, the fastness of the wondrous wizard Michael Scott overshadows it, and so do the ruins of Tushielaw,

where Adam the reiver, king of the Borders, as he was called, reigned and robbed, until tucked up by the provost-marshal of his lawful sovereign James the Fifth, over his own gateway; not to mention Thirlstane, another Scott stronghold, now belonging to Lord Napier. These, the antiquities of the valley, are auxiliarized and enhanced, as attractive objects, by the occurrence of several fine scenic points of regard, which only require the exertion of a great artist's powers to command general attention. Besides all this, the Ettrick, as an angling resort, swarming with nice lively trout, and free to every one (the ducal policies of Bowhill, which extend from the confluence of the two rivers up to Ettrick Bridge, a stretch of six or seven miles, excepted), has its store of attractions, rivalling, in some respects, those possessed by its sister stream. But then the latter leads to St. Mary's Loch. Its associations with the hunting days of the Royal Stuarts, with Outlaw Murray, and with Mary Scott, the flower of Yarrow, awakened by the remains of Newark, Hangingshaw and Dryhope Towers, not to talk of the field of Philiphaugh and tragedy of 'the Dowie Dens,' are deepened in interest as we approach the Forest Mirror, out of which glides in its fulness one of the sweetest of Tweed's tribute-bearers.

But Tibby Shiels—who is Tibby Shiels? and what connexion has Tibby with St. Mary's Loch? Considering her sphere of life and action, Tibby is perhaps, be it chronicled, one of the most noted and notable women alive. For forty years she has been the occupant of a cottage which consisted, when I first knew it, of little more than a *butt* and a *ben*, along with garret accommodation; but, circumstances requiring and means permitting, it has, since then, undergone many alterations, and affords, in its present state, comfortable night-quarters to a large party of anglers. This rural retreat is situated on a piece of meadow land which divides St. Mary's Loch from a small sheet of water, aptly called, from its position, the Loch of the Lowes or Lochs.

It is not a hostelry—never was. Its frequenters are presumed to provide, in the matter of exciseable fluids, their own cheer, and this in one respect is of advantage, as it retains in the hands of the landlady a discretionary power of admitting or refusing lodgers, whereas, where the premises are licensed, that privilege becomes questionable, or at least greatly hampered in its exercise.

The cottage of Tibby Shiels, *alias* Mrs. Richardson (it is the custom among the heights of the Border land for widows in the humbler condition of life to resume or consent to the resumption of their maiden names, and the worthy old lady, although the mother of a pretty numerous family, of course succumbs to it), along with the surrounding park or cow-grass, belongs to that most amiable of men, and able of diplomatists, Lord Napier, our present representative at the Court of Berlin, whose conversational powers and acuteness of intellect when a boy are recalled to my recollection as the augurs of an after career of high distinction and political eminence. His lordship is the superior of St. Mary's Loch; and although the lands of Corseleuch and Bourhope, in their connexion with the Thirlstane property, form its boundary on one side only, it has always been understood, although now forming a subject of dispute, that the right of fishing on the Lochs belongs exclusively to Lord Napier. The strict exercise of this right, in the way of interdicting the public from angling, he has never maintained, but on the contrary has shown every disposition, both on St. Mary's Loch and the Ettrick, in the vicinity of Thirlstane Castle, to encourage a fair use of the rod and line. Against the employment of the lath or otter, which at one time was brought to bear to an incredible extent as the engine of destruction against the trout of St. Mary's, he has very properly set his face; but all ceremony in the shape of a written permission to angle fairly with the wand is dispensed with.

In respect to the lath or otter, its introduction into Scotland took place in the year 1824 or 1825, at the hands of a Lancashire gentleman of the name of Beaver. It had previously been used on Keswick Water and several of the Cumberland lakes. Out of St. Mary's Loch, by a Scotchman from Moffat, I have seen forty or fifty pounds' weight of trout taken in the course of three or four hours; twice that quantity suffering, as individuals, the martyrdom of being dragged along on the relentless string of this water-kite, until their jaws or tongues were torn through, and the fish became liberated, only to die a death of sheer exhaustion, if not of lingering torture! In the English lake district, through the exertions of my friend Dr. Leitch of Keswick, Dr. Davy, and other gentlemen; the modellers of an admirably conducted association for the protection of the angling interests in that quarter, the use of this instrument of destruction has for some years past been entirely repressed. The system introduced in Cumberland, paved as it is with beneficial measures, I have been told, works well, promising to renovate completely the condition of the best-watered portion of England, as far as sport with the rod is concerned.

I have spoken of Tibby Shiels, my worthy landlady, as a noted and notable person. It now borders upon forty years since, as a wandering pedestrian, armed with the angler's staff, I sought accommodation under her shieling. Several strange characters, at least they were so to me—not the escaped from Bedlam, but as, in talking of the *dramatis personæ* of 'Little Dorrit,' a friend observed, 'devilish like the same'—had taken up quarters there: among others, a curious-looking, owlet-eyed, old pedagogue, rejoicing in the surname of Lyon, who had done something, no doubt, in his day and generation, in the way of juvenalizing juveniles; a half-pay army captain, who had played a part, loyal of course, in the Irish Rebellion of '98; and a Yorkshire broad-cloth manufacturer, yeleft Hodge, an ancient



also, without kith or kin of any degree, saving a maidenly sister and the *hæres ultima*, from the clutch of whom into that of the long-robed gentry his accumulated wealth, I have no doubt, has long ago found means of transference. An odd trio this to stumble upon, *all*, be it remarked, anglers, after their own fashion. Old Lyon was in the habit of devoting the greater part of the day to the assortment of his tackle, one hour at the most being appropriated to the testing of it; and the capture of a brace of trout giving occasion to a fit of pedantic ecstacy which usually exploded in a quotation, as long as my arm, from Horatius Flaccus, or some other renowned classic. The military octogenarian was astir on his pins by day-break, *up and at them*, while the trout still lay snug under their stony coverlets. His march back to breakfast was in double quick time, and in double quick time he tucked in under his belt Tibby's ham and eggs, a relay of fried trout, scones, bannocks, and wheaten loaf, with a proportional supply of milk (he abjured tea or coffee), then sallying forth, showed face no more until the verge of dusk, when in he strode with all the dignity his veteran form could muster; and, disburdening himself of his creel, shouted 'Attention' with the voice of a Stentor, emptying, as he did so, from the old-fashioned wicker-work, a dozen or two of trout so ridiculously, in point of size, unlike what we were led to expect, that Tibby, as she held out the dish to receive them, was in the habit of exclaiming, 'Ye ne'er got thae in oor Loch, Captain B. Ye hae been up the burn, I'se warrant, an' a sair day's wark ye'll hae had o't.'

As for Mr. Hodge, who, sporting his own broad cloth and a huge brimmer, looked marvellously like a man of say among the Friends, his style of angling was truly primitive. The bobbing of a cork, and the tossing over head of small perch, not to speak of the process of extricating the hook from the jaws and gills of his prickly captives, gave him, apparently, as much pleasure as

the fly-fisher derives from the practice of his more refined sport.

Of Tibby's lodgers, those I have named were amongst the earliest: but her cottage had previously, by all the sportsmen round about, been held in repute for its hospitality, and it quickly acquired a celebrity which has continued for forty years to invest it, making it a sort of headquarters for anglers, and the rendezvous in summer and autumn of pic-nic parties from the watering-places of Moffat and Innerleithen, betwixt which villages, at the distance from each of about a dozen miles, it is situated.

My introduction to this snug retreat dates the 10th of July 1828. It was recommended to me by the Ettrick Shepherd, with whom I had previously become acquainted, and who at that time lived at Mount Benger, a farm lying along the banks of the Yarrow, about three miles from the lower end of the lake. Consequent on my first visit to Tibby's cottage, I was in the habit, for a number of years, of spending several weeks at St. Mary's Loch, accompanied usually by one or two, sometimes by as many as five or six, of my College companions, all of whom, more or less, entertained a fondness for the sport of fly-fishing, which, with those who survive, remains undiminished. Among these, as a practical hand, my friend W., eldest son of Professor Wilson, was unrivalled. In streams particularly, from the Tweed in its fulness down to the smallest of its tributaries, brooks of a step in width, he excelled in the laying on of his gauzy lure, causing it to fall like a snow-flake on the desired spot, and managing a line of extraordinary length and fineness with a degree of elegance and precision I never saw surpassed, or even equalled. In loch-fishing the merits of anglers cannot properly be tested. There are circumstances in connexion with the somewhat monotonous application of the fly-cast, implied in this particular branch of the sport, which help frequently to give the

palm, I shall not say to indifferent, but to inferior hands; yet were his success on St. Mary's to be taken as a criterion of my friend's piscatorial powers, I don't require to bring better evidence than what would be supplied by Tibby herself, who, honest old lady, was never addicted, as far as I could judge, either to favouritism or to flattery. I have fished along with W. in many parts of Scotland, and always had occasion to look upon his skill as a fly-fisher as something extraordinary. Whether, many years ago, on the Water of Leith and St. Mary's Loch, on the rivers and lakes of Argyleshire, Perthshire, and the upper North, or, in a later day, on Tweed, Teviot, and the Solway Esks, the successes consequent on his fascinating power in this capacity stand out in bold relief to my own humbler performances. More than once, as his individual share of our day's booty, I have assisted him to tell off from twenty to six-and-twenty dozen of river or lake trout,—a number which it may be thought it is quite impossible in the course of a day's fishing for a single hand to overtake, or for any piece of water to yield. As a general sportsman, in connexion with Scotland, my friend W. had few equals; and had only the *cacoethes scribendi* taken possession of him, from what I know, the reading world would, long ere this, have discovered much of the sire in the son,—*that* poetry, at least, of action, feeling, thought, and imagination, improved by extensive and varied reading, which forms so distinguished a feature in the *Recreations of Christopher North*.

## SONG—THE YELLOW FINS OF YARROW.

### I.

THE yellow fins o' Yarrow dale !

I kenna whar they've gane tae ;

Were ever troots in Border vae

Sae comely or sae dainty ?

## II.

They had baith gowd and spanglit rings,  
Wi' walth o' pearl amang them ;  
An' for sweet love o' the bonnie things  
The heart was laith to wrang them.

## III.

But he that angles Yarrow ower  
(Maun changes ever waken ?)  
Frae our Lady's Loch to Newark Tower  
Will find the stream forsaken.

## IV.

Forsaken ilka bank and stane  
By a' its troots o' splendour ;  
Auld Yarrow's left sae lorn an' lane,  
Ane scarcely wad ha'e kenn'd her.

## V.

Wae's me ! the Yarrow yellow fin,  
I marvel whar he's gane tae !  
Was ever troot in Forest rin  
Sae comely or sae dainty ?

I remained at St. Mary's Loch angling assiduously in the lake itself, in Meggat also and Yarrow, until the end of the month. The notes of that date embodied in my diary represent the sport met with as indifferent. I find, however, one day made mention of—a wet and stormy one—on which a good creel was made up, thirty pounds and upwards. Meggat Water, it appears, immediately above where it enters the Loch, furnished the chief sport. In September, the same year, I spent another fortnight under Tibby's roof, devoting the afternoons chiefly to pike-fishing in

the Loch of the Lowes. From 1828 to 1835, that year also included, I made regular visits to this favourite fishing-ground, sometimes alone, but more frequently accompanied by a College friend or two. The breaking up of the Edinburgh University classes in April was the usual signal for these excursions. By the stage-coach which ran daily betwixt the Scottish capital and Peebles, the first part of the journey was wont to be performed. Arrived at Peebles, the choice lay betwixt angling up the Manor Water, thence crossing by the Bitch Craig into Meggatdale, and fishing down Tweed as far as Innerleithen, in which village it was our custom to remain all night at Riddel's Inn, and make a fresh start through Traquair towards the Lochs. These routes were adopted alternately both in going and returning from Tibby's. Sometimes, for variety's sake, instead of coaching it to Peebles, we made our way on foot through Middleton Moor to the sources of the Leithen Water, or, taking another direction, fished down Gala and up Ettrick and Yarrow. Of our halts at Innerleithen we usually took the advantage to collect the latest angling news of the district, by inviting over to a social crack and a glass of toddy the authorities on that subject belonging to this renowned watering-place—the secretary of the St. Ronan's Club, for instance, and one or two others of known excellence as fly-fishers. Occasionally, also, we extended our stay there to several days; but this was done usually on our return from the Lochs in May, when the Tweed trouts were inclined to rise freely, and its summer attractions had begun to spread over the valley. Under such conditions, our sojournings at Innerleithen were truly enjoyable; and the saunterings we took by the river-side, rod in hand, down as far as Holylee, Elibank Wood, and Ashiestiel, are still held by me, with all their attendant incidents, in lively remembrance. They formed, as the conclusion of our vernal fishing campaign, an agreeable variety to the character of the sport met by us in the heights of

the Forest; and although the returns, in the shape of well-filled baskets, were seldom so weighty, the deficit in this respect was made up, if not by greater excitement caused by the sport itself, by the influence at least which the fairer beauties of the *locale* exercised over us. These excursions at the commencement of the fishing season generally extended over three or four weeks.

Of those who took part in them along with me, not a few—it is a curious fact, illustrative of the sympathy which obtains betwixt angling and the nobler pursuits of life—have presented themselves before the public as candidates for literary renown. I could name eight or nine speculators in rhymes, more than one philosopher, scholars and lawyers of considerable eminence, along with the occupants of three or four professorial chairs, in whose company, below Tibby's roof, I have spent evenings of great delight. Highly successful among the aspirants in question stood the author of the *Lays of the Cavaliers*; for, apart from the distinctions won by him as a poet and reviewer, Professor Aytoun ranked in the estimation of his sporting friends as one of the *élite* of our Scottish anglers. His excelling points as a fly-fisher lay in the perseverance with which he plied his weapon more than in any great manifestation of skill, or a very extensive knowledge of the art. He would set to work as doggedly and as determinedly as if he had been tied, wielding the rod instead of the pen, to knock off an article for *Blackwood* before luncheon. I allude to Professor Aytoun's style of practice in his bachelor days, when he was wont to hold our Border rivers in consideration; and I have no reason to suppose that, within the sphere of his sheriffdom, which comprehended the Orkney and Shetland Islands, he was induced to alter it. Three or four years ago I happened to meet him in Edinburgh, and our conversation turning on the subject of fishing, he entertained me with so animated an account of his sport and adventures, in connexion with the

lakes and tide-casts of the Ultima Thule, that I am led to believe both his ardour and industry as an angler remained to the last unabated,—the pressure of those numerous professional and literary avocations in which he was engaged only assisting to increase his zest for the amusement.

Another frequenter of Tibby's shieling in those days—one who, obedient to a grand impulse, and wrapt up in the philosopher's mantle, long ago dropt the rod, which in youth, as I well recollect, was handled by him with enthusiasm and witching skill—was the highly gifted author of *The Theory of Knowing and Being*, the late and much-lamented Professor Ferrier of St. Andrews. In foregoing the indulgence of sport, Professor Ferrier retained that shadow of attachment towards it which draws one almost unconsciously to the spots where it is to be met with. I remember how this disposition used to betray itself in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh in his saunterings with the late Sir William Hamilton, the profoundest of scholars and deepest of thinkers Scotland perhaps has ever produced; the breathing and intelligent catalogue to which the literary serfs of Modern Athens, pushed for the solution of some historic or philosophic problem, were accustomed freely to refer. Frequently on a Saturday afternoon, when employed in thrashing the Water of Leith, have I been made conscious of the superintendence of the two metaphysicians, and the eloquent interest they took in an amusement deemed by the wits of the last century so very contemptible.

The last occasion on which I met with Professor Ferrier at Tibby's, this idiosyncrasy, as it may be termed, combining the exercise of self-control with the attachment in question, discovered itself to an extent which I often look back upon with surprise, accepting, notwithstanding, as a key to the mystery, the fact of a struggle going on betwixt the emotional and the reasoning powers, an active mind at war with its own sympathies,

philosophy asserting its dominion over the poetry of one's nature. I cannot believe, at least, that without some struggle of this sort, a zealous and accomplished angler, who at one time took a passionate delight in the practice of the art, could be brought to look upon it, all at once, with a subdued and meditative eye, and to scan its disciples only as curious subjects for anatomical investigation. On the occasion I refer to—it extended over a period of nearly three weeks in the month of April 1835, the weather cold and otherwise disagreeable—my friend's lingerings of devotion to the sacrificed idol of his boyhood were displayed solely in the pleasure with which he accompanied me to the water-side, and contemplated my proceedings in the way of starting and landing trout, his fine expressive features becoming more and more radiant as the sport improved.

A list, confined solely to the enumeration of literary lions and scientific celebrities whom Tibby's thatch from time to time has given shelter to, would occupy a large space in these reminiscences. Her visitor's book, a superfluity of several years' standing, which some busy-body must have provoked our simple hostess to indulge in, teeming as it does with hieroglyphs, and impressed here and there with the signatures of august presences, can give no idea of the run of intellect upon the pastoral habitation at the head of St. Mary's. Of the trysts and festivities held there, the fun and frolic, the wanton waste of wit and wisdom, the wealth of song and eloquence poured out, the loves whispered, the hopes cherished, the great thoughts and gigantic projects entertained, not a record is left. Nor is there any memorial which circumstantially and statistically condescendeth on the feats of the mighty anglers who were wont to count their spoils beneath its porch. I have seen emptied into the big tub (which Tibby, who well knew the days when fish were merrily inclined, and judged of the occasion by the company she happened to entertain, was in the habit of producing as the common receptacle)



such creel-loads of trout, the renderings not of St. Mary's and its sister lake alone, but of Loch Skene to boot; the Yarrow, Ettrick, and Meggat; Winterhope, Chapelhope, and Corsecleugh burns (none of which is so far out of reach but that an hour-and-a-half's walk may command access to it), as would astonish some of my friends in the South, who, in regard to this species of the *Salmonidæ*, place the captured individuals on a rank with game, and talk of them, not as we do by the dozen, but by the brace.

As a frequent guest under Tibby's roof, and entitled, moreover, as a Forest chield and a zealous angler, to special notice, I must not omit to mention James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. With his recognised *status* among our poets I do not pretend to deal. The opinions of critics on poetry have only the age in which they are sported to back them. They are not, as we Scotchmen would say, greatly 'to be lippened to.' History has proved, and will continue to do so, that contemporary criticism is seldom guided by the ken which secures its judgment against reversal. Hogg's poetry, it appears to me, has had but bare justice done to it through this medium; but sinewed as it is with nationality, and teeming with rich fancies, it cannot fail to gain in position, if it does not eventually take its stand, side by side, with the productions of Robert Burns.

In his capacity as an angler the Ettrick Shepherd was decidedly hill-bred. The niceties of the art he neither studied nor cared to study. He was not at all fastidious as to rod or tackle, but usually gave the preference, in the case of the former, to length and strength as desired qualities. A stiff sixteen-foot wand, and salmon-gut to correspond, carried the day over any Phin or Mackenzie—at that time the crack rod-makers in Edinburgh—which was ever fitted up. The rise of the Yarrow, consequent on a high westerly wind blowing down St. Mary's, was usually held by him as a sort of invitation to the Loch; and on its occurrence, when apprised of the presence of kindred

souls at Tibby's, the Shepherd generally sallied forth in that direction, thrashing the river upwards from Altrive Cottage, and, on reaching the point of outlet, proceeding by the Bourhope side towards Corsecleugh. On his way along the margin, the choice bays were all regularly traversed with the fly, and a good creel made up, partly of Yarrow, but chiefly of Loch trout, before he arrived at the place of tryst.

I recollect well the alarm created on one of these occasions, to several of his friends, myself among the rest, who, at the close of the day, were proceeding, on the opposite side of the lake, towards their night quarters at Tibby's. The Shepherd, at a point not usually resorted to by fish of migratory habits, had hooked a salmon or large bull-trout (there was no distinction then recognised in the Forest heights betwixt the two species), the lively movements of which, under control of his rod, called into exercise a corresponding demonstration on the part of the bard. Viewed at a distance, this strange display of flurry and excitement, the running to and fro, and backwards and forwards, was naturally enough construed into the conduct of a maniac. We were struck, in fact, with the terrible impression that Mr. Hogg, whom we had recognised as the actor in this singular scene, had become all at once insane; nor was the mystery cleared up until we met, simultaneously, so it happened, at Tibby's porch; the Shepherd, as he greeted us, displaying with an air of triumph a fish of some nine or ten pounds' weight. Had any of us at that time been salmon-fishers, we would have been saved, no doubt, the apprehensions under which we hurried up from Summerhope towards the cottage. Our ignorance also on the same score led us to consider as a great prize, judging by its silvery appearance, what was in all probability a kelt or lately spawned fish, specimens of which, smaller in size, were frequently taken by me in these days, under a similar impression, out of St. Mary's, Yarrow, and Ettrick. It formed, of course, on this occasion, one of the

pretences for a protracted *gaudeamus*, the term applied to those jovial merry-makings with which, on a meeting of congenial souls, the day was usually wound up. It must not be supposed, however, that under Tibby's roof these *symposia*, although frequently indulged in, degenerated at any time into scenes of drunken riot. Although whisky-toddy was in circulation, as the beverage best suited to that upland region, and refreshingly exhilarating above all others to the angler, after a hearty meal on his return from the water's side, it was always, as far as I can recollect, imbibed with propriety and in moderation; its invariable effects being to promote good fellowship, and from reserved natures to elicit sparks, from open ones to draw flashes of intelligence and joyous humour, which had else, without its inspiring influence, never come to light.

The occasional presence of the Ettrick Shepherd at these meetings assisted rather to relieve them than otherwise, of a bacechanalian tendency; and although we were inclined, when so favoured, in spite of the gentle remonstrances of our worthy landlady, to prolong them to a late hour, it was seldom at the risk of being constrained to encounter more than an *extra* tumbler, in return for which outrage self-inflicted upon our temperate habits, we were sure to be gratified, on demand, with a lilt from the poet. His favourites, which I have heard him give voice to above a score of times, and he did so invariably with a heartiness of expression that counterbalanced any little defect there might be of musical taste or ear, were his well-known rendering of the Jacobite air, 'Prince Charlie,' or 'Cam ye by Athol,' and that simple but beautiful love-lay, headed, 'When the kye comes hame.'

I cannot refrain from calling up, in connexion with those festive meetings, the occasion of a wedding, in which the eldest son of Tibby figured as bridegroom, and a daughter of the tenant of Corsecleugh farm as bride. The date is preserved in my

journal,—4th May 1832. Professor Aytoun and I, then quartered at the cottage, were invited as guests. The Shepherd was to be there; so were half the inhabitants of the district. Close upon the hour appointed, Mr. Hogg accordingly made his appearance, rod in hand, and in the folds of his inseparable plaid a fiddle. This instrument, a Cremona and Straduaris for aught I know, although not the only contribution of its kind to the mirth of the evening, enacted, in the hands of the bard, a leading part. It was the promoter of as much fun and frolic as ever sprung from the contact of horse-hair and catgut. The dance started out of it in all the shapes and varieties which the reel-tunes o' auld Scotland, played with spirit and a supple wrist, could educe. To old as well as young, to grey-haired carles and wrinkled crones, as well as to the blooming and weel-faured—the braw lads and winsome lasses of the Forest, it gave limbs of speed and faces of joy. The Shepherd was in his glory: he had struck the proper key, and out leaped those strains of inspiriting harmony which impart a common impulse—those sounds hilarious which provoke to life and saltatory action. As fast and furious waxed the fun of that night as it ever did, to Robert Burns's fancy, within the haunted walls of Kirk Alloway, and as fair were the witches there assembled as any that ever gave chase to glorious Tam and his mare Meg. I shall not easily forget the readiness with which my friend Aytoun and myself entered into the spirit of the scene; or how, clad in sporting costume, we kept time, as well as we could, to the hurrying pace of the Shepherd's fiddle-stick, bargaining for a parley, now and then, with our comely partners, who seemed as if they could have shaken the leg, twirled on the fantastic toe, and beaten time with the playful heel for a century to come, provided the music of the bard kept them in countenance. As the upshot of the ploy, Mr. Hogg was persuaded to take up his night, or rather morning, quarters with us at Tibby's. The unusual excitement

which he had been thrown into preventing him from sleeping, induced also an extraordinary degree of thirst, which, as I well recollect (occupying as we did a double-bedded apartment), after expending itself on the contents of the water-jug and ewer, led him to bawl out, 'Tibby, wuman! water's terrible scarce wi' ye; can ye no fetch in the Loch itsel', for I'm afeared we'll need it a'?'

## SONNET.

THE fellow-anglers of my youthful days,  
(Of past realities we form our dream,)  
I watch them re-assembling by the stream,  
And on the group with solemn musings gaze :  
For some are lost in life's bewildering haze,  
And some have left their sport and ta'en to toil,  
And some have faced the ocean's wild turmoil,  
And some—a very few—their olden ways  
By shining lake and river still pursue ;  
Ah ! *one* I gaze on 'mid the fancied band,  
Unlike the rest in years, in gait, in hue—  
Uprisen from a dim and shadowy land—  
Ask what loved phantom fixes my regard,  
Yarrow's late pride, the Angler, Shepherd, Bard !

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ETTRICK FOREST.

FROM 1828 to 1835, the latter year included, I paid a stated visit to St. Mary's Loch, taking up my quarters at Tibby Shiels' well-known Howff. It was generally before the conclusion of the winter session at the Edinburgh University, that the yearning to

be astir with the fisher's wand seized upon me with its greatest violence. I find marked down in my journal, during the period mentioned, dates and details as to sport met with in the streams round about Edinburgh, preliminary to those periodical visits, which induce me to think that I must have been carried by my enthusiasm, in the practice of the art piscatorial, far beyond the bounds of common sobriety, and wasted a mighty deal of precious time to little or no purpose. Be that as it may, I experience as much satisfaction in looking back upon them, as I do upon hours more laboriously spent, the fruit of which I have never so much as enjoyed the forecast of. With educational systems, however, about which we are all still at loggerheads, and at whose shifting shrines every one of us, no doubt, has been more or less victimized, an angling devotee would use little or no discretion were he to interfere.

The dates and details referred to are exact and varied enough to be employed as groundwork for a review of the condition of rod-fishing at that time and season round about Edinburgh; and might, with reasonable propriety, be brought to bear upon questions of considerable interest in connexion with it. I find, on reference to my journal, that, in the course of the eight years above specified, preparatory to my annual visit to St. Mary's Loch, I spent nearly a hundred days in thus exploring the trout-haunts within hail of my native city. Such excursions appear, as they stand recorded, to have been the mere girdings up for my annual campaign in the Borders, which was usually undertaken (the introductory one in 1828 forming an exception) about the end of April or the first week of May. To enjoy in perfection the fine pastoral scenery of the Ettrick Forest, a term no longer appropriate, although still applied to Selkirkshire, it is necessary to let the summer influences fully predominate, which they rarely do before June or July in that upland district; but for fly-fishing, particularly on the lake, May in general will be found

the most suitable month. The trout are then, throughout the greater portion of the day, in feeding humour; and it is seldom that the angler has to complain of want of sport on account of a want of wind to ruffle the surface; whereas, in the height of summer, such an occurrence is quite common, and vexatious often beyond measure.

My annual visits to St. Mary's in spring averaged, in their duration, upwards of three weeks. In the matter of weather, I was often, as far as personal comfort was concerned, unfortunate, impatience leading me out before the easterly winds had had their surfeit, or even the snow-drifts on the Coppercleugh, a rocky hill which overshadows the lake not far from the entrance of the Meggat Water, had shown a melting disposition. Cordings and Mackintoshes, in the shape of water-proof boots and stockings, were then unknown, but wading was practised nevertheless. Some of the choicest ground in the Loch cannot be commanded without plunging thigh-deep into the water. There was no saying nay to it in those days; and although I should not like to recommit myself to the practice, I see no reason to associate with it such harmful results as those attributed by Sir Humphry Davy and others. The precautions to be taken are to keep moving, to walk smartly home to your quarters, and forthwith to exchange your wet habiliments for dry, warm clothing. A glass of reeking hot whisky-punch will prove the best of all restoratives, should a tendency to shiver really occur. As to the water-proof stockings and wading-boots now in general use, they are not to be held absolved, as sources from which mischief may equally accrue. They induce violent perspirations, which are liable to be suddenly checked, and surround the limbs with fetid vapours, which cannot but prove, in their action upon the pores of the skin, enervating and deleterious. As regards cramp, lumbago, and rheumatic attacks, I must admit that, in the course of my life, I have had a plenary share of them; but I have gene-

rally been able to trace each individual case either to some act of imprudence in the way of deep wading, during very cold weather, or, when using water-proofs, to getting over-heated. Immediately connected with this indulgence of the habit, when young, I cannot bring to mind any one instance in which I seriously suffered from moderate wading,—the precautions above-mentioned being strictly adhered to. As already observed, however, I should not like to recommit myself to the bygone practice, unless, let me add, at a temperature, in the water itself, approaching 55 degrees. Although I have crowned May queen of months in connexion with angling on St. Mary's Loch, April has been excluded by me solely on account of its uncertainty. My diary, however, speaks befriendingly of April, consorted with sport on this lake. I find in it the following entries :—

29th April 1829,	.	.	25	trout,	weighing	17	lb.
23d „ 1831,	.	.	42	„	„	26	„
30th „ 1831,	.	.	43	„	„	25	„
21st „ 1832,	.	.	43	„	„	27	„
29th „ 1833,	.	.	67	„	„	32	„
29th „ 1834,	.	.	78	„	„	35	„
23d „ 1835,	.	.	49	„	„	28	„

To these captures, in the years mentioned, many close approaches were made, which it is needless to specify. From the May record I extract as follows :—

12th May 1829,	1	salmon kelt,	51	trout,	weighing	27	lb.
15th „ 1830,	.	.	36	„	„	24	„
19th „ 1830,	.	.	47	„	„	23	„
7th „ 1832,	.	.	60	„	„	21	„
4th „ 1833,	.	.	79	„	„	36	„

The trout of St. Mary's Loch, in point of external appearance and edible qualities, vary more than those of any sheet of water I am acquainted with. This is owing, among other causes, to the diversity of the feeding-grounds. Although, when in condition, some of them show well and cut red, they rarely come



up to that standard of perfection arrived at by the trout of many of our Highland lakes. As to size, they range generally from a quarter of a pound up to a pound. I twice, near Bourhope, exactly at the same spot, and after an interval of more than twenty years, caught a yellow trout upwards of three pounds; but these (the last was taken in August 1853, and turned the scale at three and a half pounds) were the largest specimens of the loch trout that ever came under my regard. The Meggat, which, although it enters laterally, is the principal feeder of the lake, used to yield trout of a pound and a half; and from the Yarrow, its discharge, I have educed still heavier ones. Yarrow, however, although it retains its classic interest, and flows apparently as unsullied as ever, has lost, I fear, much of its old repute as an angling stream. My last visit to it was paid recently (15th June 1865), on which occasion, having scrutinized it narrowly the whole way down, I felt mortified to find, the more especially as the discovery was one which jarred with associations of an agreeable nature, that neither in size nor appearance, nor in respect to numbers, are the trout of Yarrow what they used to be. The old breed of 'yellow fins,' as the Ettrick Shepherd used to call them, individuals belonging to which breed, of the weight of three pounds, it was not uncommon for the fly-fisher to fall in with, has apparently died out, or become so crossed with inferior varieties that it is questionable whether a pure specimen survives. With my annual visits to Tibby's cottage, I usually combined a stroll across the hills to the vale of the Ettrick, which lies at a distance of about four miles from the lochs. Unlike Yarrow, this river retains its repute as an angling stream. In 1860, and still more recently, my friend Wilson and I, in the neighbourhood of Crosslee and Thirlstane, took some good baskets out of it, graced with trout of more than a pound weight. Some of the burns which flow into Ettrick—the Timah and Rankle burn particularly, swarm with small trout. These hill

feeders fish best late in the season, on the occurrence of a flood; and it is out of their accessories chiefly that a good hand at burn-fishing will most readily fill his creel. I find mention in my journal of several takes made by me on the Ettrick, comprising from five up to seven dozens.

Allied to Ettrickdale is a fine trouting loch of about a mile in circumference, called Clearburn Loch, the fish of which approach in weight about half-a-pound. It belongs to his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch. A disease, assimilated in many respects to that by which grouse and black-game are periodically attacked, namely, the tape-worm, made its appearance a few years ago among the trout of this lake. The features of the disease, as described by my informant, a son of Mr. Ogilvie of Chesters, the district chamberlain, corresponded to what I have observed more than once in the fresh-water trout of other lakes; but the cases falling under my observation partook of an isolated character, and did not, as in the instance named, affect a whole locality. Among perch diseases are common; and I am here induced to mention a singular circumstance, in relation to this fish, which came under my notice, not many years ago, at Dunse Castle Loch. This piece of water, which occupies an area of forty or fifty acres, is strictly preserved. It contains tench, abounds with perch of a small uniform size, and is plentifully stocked with water-fowl of all descriptions from the swan downwards. My much lamented friend, the late Dr. Johnston of Berwick, the well-known and accomplished naturalist, traced from this lake the introduction into some of our Border streams of that prolific and troublesome weed, *Anacharis alsinastrium*, the vegetating powers of which are something extraordinary. On one of four or five occasions on which I fished here, with permission of the proprietor, the pond being nearly choked up, I took about three dozens of perch, exactly one-half of which wanted an eye. How to account for such a deficiency in so large a proportion,

remains to me a puzzle. The Rev. Mr. Crowder of Dunse was along with me at the time, and met with a similar experience. On an after occasion, on the same pond, among four or five scores of perch taken by me, I could only discover a single one-eyed specimen.

## THE OLD WAND.

### I.

THE wand that hath done service fair  
From thy boyhood to thy prime,  
Onwards to thine after-time  
Cherish. It is worth all care.

### II.

Many a fair-spoken friend  
Hath less friendship in his heart  
Than this passive piece of art,  
And will fail thee at the end.

### III.

But a trusty rod and tried,  
Warp'd by service though it be,  
Toughens in adversity,  
And clings the nearer to thy side.

### IV.

Cherish it for thine own sake,  
For the record of events  
Hanging on its accidents,  
And the memories these awake.

## V.

Ferrule bent—distorted ring—  
Top curtail'd or past repair—  
The continual wear and tear,  
And relaxing of its spring ;

## VI.

Every notch by knife impress'd,  
Ranging up and down the butt,  
In its form of cross or rutt,  
Is to thee of interest.

## VII.

In the fortunes of thy wand  
Thou hast part, no common part,  
And the beatings of thy heart  
With its triumphs correspond.

## VIII.

Give it place in thine abode—  
In thy dwelling's inner shrine—  
In the chamber made divine  
By love and faith, lay up thy rod.

## IX.

When the wielder's arm is weak,  
And care's fever is at height ;  
In the watches of the night,  
'Mid the silence it will speak ;

## X.

Of the rivers' joys discoursing  
When the skies are overcast,  
Making thankful for the past,  
And a purer life enforcing ;

## XI.

Whispering with bated breath  
Of a valley and a stream,  
Leading to a land of dream—  
The river and the vale of death.

## XII.

Symbol be it to fulfil  
The sweet promises of God,—  
Symbol of the Staff and Rod  
Guiding by the waters still !

## THE SHEPHERD'S DOG.

*June 1830.*—It was about this time, I am inclined to think, I met under the bard's roof at Altrive, with a then famous, but erratic animal painter, Howe by name, the object of whose visit to Yarrow was to take a sketch of the celebrated colley-dogs, whose sagacious feats stand emblazoned in 'The Shepherd's Calendar,' a series of articles contributed by Mr. Hogg to *Blackwood's Magazine*. The canine originals were then defunct, but their direct descendants and after-types were in possession of a neighbour, the tenant of Eildonhope, from whom they were borrowed for the occasion. Of these two dogs, a sketch in oils,

which, for fidelity and spirit, vied with anything I ever saw of the kind, was taken by the artist in the course of a few minutes. Any finish attempted to be given to it would probably have destroyed the effect, but for an effort of this sort the wielder of the brush at that time appeared incapable; and I have not at hand the means of ascertaining that he ever at a former period of his life attained to further excellence than that of hitting off, in a few masterly strokes, a correct and life-like representation of his subject. I was highly amused, I recollect, at the indignation of this rough genius, when inadvertently addressed by the Shepherd as Mr. Howie, the name of an animal painter at that time in considerable employment in Edinburgh. The mistake, a likely one to occur, had been taken at first in good part, or at least passed over with no stronger symptom of annoyance than a wry face, or a shrug of the shoulder; and it was not until the artist had become partaker of the poet's pressing hospitalities, had feasted on freshly-caught yellow-fins and forest-mutton, and had dashed over a tumbler or two of whisky-punch, that his dignity fairly took fire. Suddenly, the loathsome name of his rival having been once more applied to him, up he started, seized hold of his hat and stick, clapped the former impressively on his head, and, brandishing the latter with a menacing air, thus addressed the astonished bard: 'My name, sir, is Howe, not Howie. I am Howe, sir, the animal painter; the only animal painter in the world. I don't daub signs, boars' heads, and Turks, red lions and green crocodiles, like the miserable prostitute you confound me with. Good afternoon, Mr. Hogg; good afternoon, gentlemen. I leave that,' pointing to the sketch, which had been placed on the chimney-piece, 'to correct your ignorance, and to teach you that Howe and Howie are very different men.' So saying, followed by a travelling companion, who had evidently from his appearance been placed as a curb upon his vagaries, he stalked out, and, in spite of every remonstrance and apology,

made his way to the Gordon Arms, where, if respect to the Clan Howe was not more punctiliously paid, the benefit at least of his society as a toper would be better appreciated. What has been the fate of this sketch I could never discover, but I recollect that the Shepherd himself set a growing value upon it, as a faithful representation, embodying every notable point, of the breed to which his favourites belonged.

Mention made of the colley or sheep-dog, so extensively employed in the pastoral districts of Scotland, leads me to bear testimony to the amount of sagacity, approaching intelligence, displayed by this variety of the *Canis domesticus*. The attachment shown by the colley to its master, and the anxiety displayed by it to fulfil his wishes to the letter, have often been commented on. This latter characteristic goes far beyond the spirit of obedience acquired, say in the case of the pointer, by good training. It not only prompts the execution of certain duties, but actually forestalls or anticipates what is required. There is, in fact, that which holds good for a reasoning power in the sheep-dog (and I may class with it the retriever and Newfoundland), possessed, for the direct advantage of the human race, by none other of the inferior animals.

A great many curious instances, falling under personal observation, I could adduce, touching the near approach to intelligence manifested by individuals belonging to this variety of the canine tribe. One only of these I shall relate.

My friend Wilson possessed a favourite dog of the colley breed, by name Rover, which generally accompanied him on his angling excursions. On one occasion, shortly after it came into his possession, we arranged to spend a week or two together at St. Mary's Loch. Accordingly, taking the dog along with us, we proceeded by coach from Edinburgh to Peebles, a distance of twenty-two miles; and from thence made our way on foot up the Manor Water, passing over the Cramault heights to Meggat and

the head of the Loch, a further distance of fifteen or sixteen miles. After remaining nearly a fortnight at Tibby's cottage, we started again for Edinburgh by Innerleithen, fishing down, on our way to that village, the upper portion of Yarrow. It was not until the afternoon, when we arrived at the Gordon Arms, near where the road leads off from the river towards Traquair, that the absence of Rover was noticed; and it was then recollected that he had been left shut up at Tibby's cottage. It being too late to remedy matters, my friend's mind was at once made up to leave the care of the dog to our hostess, who was well versed in the management of that particular breed. Proceeding to Innerleithen, we spent the night there, and on the following day returned to Edinburgh. One of the first things my friend proposed to do, on his arrival at Gloucester Place, was to post directions to Mrs. Richardson as to how Rover was to be sent home. This intention, however, was agreeably put to flight on entering the paternal residence, by the appearance of the dog itself, safe and sound, ears cocked and tail wagging, whining out a welcome to its truant and negligent master. What appears to me most singular in this incident, is not the mere return of the animal (which, on inquiry, had preceded our own by six or seven hours, and had been accomplished, the greater part of it, over a line of country it was virtually unacquainted with), but the sagacity which had detected our desertion of the cottage, and had induced Rover to beat its own retreat without much delay, in quest of the city quarters where it had been brought up and domesticated.

Some remarkable exemplifications of the instinct and sagacity which distinguish the colley might be instanced in connexion with the upland parishes in the counties of Selkirk, Peebles, and Dumfries. My recollections of the parish of Ettrick associate with them a congregation composed nearly as much of dogs as of men. The population of that rural parish consists chiefly of hill



farmers and their shepherds. The colley, out of compliment to his services, is recognised in almost every house as a member of the family. He is at work with his master throughout the day, takes his meals with him, or at any rate shares in them, sleeps at the hearth-stone, or 'under the settle, or, it may be, in the cosy parlour itself, and, like a respectable Christian, goes to the kirk with him. The conduct of those dogs in the place of worship is usually unexceptionable. I am not aware that their presence has ever been objected to by kirk-session, presbytery, or synod; or that a single act of canine levity or impropriety, committed within the hallowed precincts, stands recorded on the parish books. This is the more singular, as it is not uncommon for a score of these animals to be brought into close quarters with each other, under the sacred roof; many of them notorious yelpers, and not a few of them primed with grudges and feudal animosities. All symptoms of impatience, however, are invariably kept under control until the conclusion of the service; and to prevent them breaking forth inopportunately, it is the custom of the herds to remain sitting during the parting blessing, the rest of the congregation, as is the usual practice in the Presbyterian Church, receiving it in a standing posture. In the event of their masters being detained at home on the Sabbath, the dogs belonging to some of the outlying farms, unless checked by special interdict, will, I have been informed by one of Lord Napier's tenantry, set off of their own accord over the hills, to hold convention in Ettrick churchyard, or the premises adjoining it. On such occasions, it appears, they pay a punctual respect to the hours of the clock, dispersing, without fail, at the breaking up of the congregation; or, should there happen to be no service, within a few minutes of the customary time of dissolution.

I have often been amazed at the preference given to many varieties of the domestic dog over the *Canis pecuarius*, which, while it combines the qualities appreciated in the terrier, the

greyhound, and the watch-dog, viz., a good nose, wind, and speed, plenty jaw-power, and, if properly trained, pluck and bottom to boot, in addition to these recommendations displays, as a characteristic of its breed, a spirit of devotional attachment to its master and his interests, so strong as almost to induce a belief in the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration.

Applied to the colley, the word *cur* is certainly unreasonable, and to rank the shepherd's dog with mongrel breeds is to do it the grossest injustice. Sneaking or cowardly habits, no doubt, have often been ascribed, with some show of truth, to the race or caste, but I am satisfied, for my part, that such habits are quite at variance with the natural dispositions of the dog. The reproach, at one time proverbial, is to be traced to the first impressions received by strangers in passing across a pastoral line of country. The sudden bolting out of the dogs, their noisy salutations, mistaken for expressions of rage, or dislike and provocation, in consequence of aggressive measures on the part of the passer-by, which are met with, it must be allowed, often in an abject fashion, have been construed, hastily and unwarrantably, into acts of offence, followed up by craven and irresolute conduct. A further acquaintance with the colley will show that such demonstrations are complimentary, not hostile, and that the misconstruction put upon them leads to those manifestations of deference and contrition on the part of the unwitting offender, which have been attributed to want of proper pluck and canine spirit. To the usual training of the shepherd's dog is owing a great deal of what has been placed to its discredit. This may be tested, as it often has been, simply by transferring it to a different scene of action, and submitting it to a different course of discipline. But, judging of the colley in its own proper sphere, with all the failings incident to its treatment and education, I feel justified in asserting that there is no animal in the world, which, at so small a cost and so little trouble, serveth the human

race more largely ; none which, by its unwavering fidelity, its prompt obedience, its activity and powers of endurance, and its apt, sagacious, and companionable nature, holds higher claims upon the gratitude and esteem of the pastoral community, and of mutton-eaters in general.

## THE VOICE OF THE CUCKOO.

### I.

Is the cuckoo come ? Is the cuckoo come ?  
Hear you its happy voice  
Bidding the hills rejoice,  
Greeting green summer and sweet May-morn ?  
See you the bird,  
Or starts the loved word  
Out from the heart of some dewy thorn ?

### II.

Is the cuckoo come ? Is the cuckoo come ?  
Down by the reedy spring  
Watching its welcome wing,  
Wends the lone angler toward the lake ;  
Joy in his heart,  
With fancy alert,  
He rears sunny visions wandering awake.

### III.

Is the cuckoo come ? Is the cuckoo come ?  
Lover of chiming streams !  
Banish thine airy dreams,  
Hark the wild-note of the fairy-voiced bird !  
Now in the glen,  
And listen again,  
Up on the hill-side rings the glad word.

## IV.

Is the cuckoo come ? Is the cuckoo come ?  
Haste to thy loved resort,  
Haste to thy pleasant sport,  
Shake the brown palmer o'er streamlet and lake !  
Hark ! on the wind,  
Before thee—behind—  
Plaintively calleth the bird of the brake !

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## A T ELLERAY.

As far back it was as September and October 1831, that I visited the English Lakes, and spent a happy fortnight at Elleray, the villa or cottage ornée which formed the country residence of the late Professor Wilson. It is situated on a richly-wooded slope or hill-face overlooking Windermere, at the distance of a mile and a half from the village of Bowness. Great changes have taken place since then in that locality. These cannot be said to have affected, to any material extent, the general features of the Lake country, as far as its scenery is concerned, but they have certainly interfered with many objects of interest which gave character to the district. The genius of utility is everywhere trenching upon the poetical, and from a mere confusion of rock and water, woodland and pasture ground, is working out, with hammer and wheel, with saw and lever, with plough and spade, with fire, forge, and steam, by squares and parallels, silently but surely, a new order of things. No longer tenanted are the homes of the bards, who, a quarter of a century ago, fed the ear of England with sweet song, and drew from the banks of the Isis and the Cam, from musty books and college ceremony,

classic bands towards Cumberland and its altar-stones of inspiration. Here, at Rydal Mount, not far from Ambleside, lived William Wordsworth. At Grasmere, Hartley Coleridge resided. De Quincey also was allied by marriage to this district; and at Greta Hall, not far from Keswick, dwelt Southey, the most indefatigable in his day of scholars, historians, and versifiers. The pass to the then palace-lands of poetry was guarded at Elleray by the athlete in body and limb, as well as in intellect, Christopher North; and no point more appropriate whereon to erect a key to the fairy realm could well have been selected. It brought boldly before the eye the first sweet engaging vision of the Lake territory, and by exciting the mind with agreeable anticipations, directed it beyond the scope of visible objects into the world of the ideal. The Cumberland giants, its mental wrestlers, all are dead.

In casually mentioning, however, the Lake school, I have no design to wax sentimental, or run away altogether from piscatorial into poetical subjects. My recollections of Cumberland and Elleray almost necessarily lead to a train of associations bearing upon the literature of the district, which somehow I cannot altogether dissever from the angler's pleasures, particularly in this instance, as Elleray was the summer retreat, not of a mere book-worm or scholarly recluse, but of one who took part in the battle of passing events, and, along with severe exercise of mind, blended that of bodily endowments,—who, while he excelled in the labours of the closet and professorial chair, stood pre-eminent also as a lover and cultivator of manly sport in all its forms. It was with a classical apprehension that he regarded the exercises of the *palæstra*, and vindicated the play of fisticuffs, as a remnant of the *virtus* inculcated by Greek and Roman example. So far from being degrading and brutal, pugilistic contests, properly conducted, were in his estimation a wholesome check on national effeminacy, and to encourage them was to assist, in some measure,

in cultivating the true *sine quibus non* of independence, individual or national, viz., pluck and the art of self-defence. With the gloves, during his stay at Oxford, the Professor is reputed to have been a stunning hand; and had the *chirothecæ* or cœstus-lined gauntlets been then in vogue, the hide of the Phalerian bull or rhinoceros, instead of the soft chamois-covered mufflers sported nearly a century before by Jack Broughton, many the *cerebrum* that would have needed a numskull's share of the *os frontis* to keep it together in phrenological compactness. In leaping, wrestling, running, yachting, and rowing, John Wilson also excelled. To his pre-eminence in these exercises, Mrs. Gordon, in the admirable Memoir of her father, frequently refers, recording with filial pride, among other feats, the remarkable one of clearing on a dead level twenty-three feet at a single leap. 'This achievement,' it is stated, 'took place in the presence of many spectators, at a bend of the Cherwell, a tributary of the Isis, where it glides beautifully through the enamelled meads of Christ Church, the leap being taken across the stream.'

In respect to speed of foot, there is fresh on my memory an instance of the Professor's superiority, shown at a period of his life when active exercise of every kind had been laid aside, in exchange for literary pursuits and sedentary habits. It was on the occasion of a short, good-humoured contest, provoked by a member of the Edinburgh Six-foot Club, whom nature had provided with a pair of stilts that looked as if they might almost have kept pace with the seven-league boots of fairy romance. A practised runner, at the zenith of his speed, and the Professor's junior by at fewest twenty years, the odds were mightily in his favour; and there could be no doubt, judging from the self-reliant alacrity with which he pounced upon the challenge, half-jestingly and half-seriously made, that he so considered them. The whole affair was proposed, arranged, and executed in the course of a few minutes, on a piece of high-road within three miles of Edin-

burgh, Christopher North taking the lead, and sustaining it triumphantly past the winning-post.

At the time of my visit to Ellera, the yachting rage, so vividly depicted by Lockhart in his *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, had subsided, and at Bowness the larger class of sailing craft belonging to the Professor, which had taken part in the celebrated regatta, had been hauled up, unrigged, and allowed in several instances to fall into a state of complete disrepair. The boating establishment was under charge of Billy Balmer, the factotum at Ellera in all sporting matters, whose appearance and accomplishments, taken into connexion with his rich Cumberland humour, indicated great individuality of character. Billy was of short stature, fair-complexioned, and flaxen-haired, with a clear blue intelligent eye. Of his age, when I first saw him, it was difficult to judge. He was probably upwards of sixty. With the Professor he stood in high favour, and was retained by him to the last at Bowness as a dependant, free of service. Billy's tastes led to an intimate acquaintance with the habits of most of the animals, fishes as well as birds and quadrupeds, native to the Lake district. This acquaintance included a thorough knowledge of the game-cock, its points and mode of training. It extended also to a fair average notion of the treatment required by the inhabitants of the stable, the kennel, and the poultry-yard; but the old boy evidently was most at home, so to call it, when abroad in the covert or at the river-side. An angler he was not, in the true sense of the term, but he had all the enthusiasm of one, and without caring to handle the rod himself, could give the most invaluable instructions to others, both as to the places where, and the manner how, to do execution in beck or tarn. His attendance upon the Professor in his fishing excursions in the Lake district may partly account for this proficiency, but it was to be traced also to an indulgence when young in those roving and inquiring inclinations, which no doubt tend to poach-

ing habits, yet only require to be considerably dealt with in order to be turned to useful account.

Elleray was in truth, at the time I visited it, a poet's retreat. Its relation to Windermere gave it command over the loveliest portion of the scenery of that Queen of Lakes. It has been described by Wilson himself as—

‘ Resting on the brow  
(Beneath its sycamore) of Orrest-hill,  
As if it smiled on Windermere below  
Its green recesses and its islands still.’

The sycamore flourishes green as ever, and the fairy dwelling retains its joyous outlook. But it is in the hands of the stranger, and its retirement, the sanctity of the spot, many of its sweetest associations, are broken up by the disturbing contiguity of a railway terminus. There was a green shady lane leading towards Bowness, which in the autumnal dusk sparkled with glowworms, as did its hedges at noon with haws and blackberries; there was a hazel-copse crowning the slope, hung in its season with clusters of nuts, and beyond it lay a swamp, forming a portion of Applethwaite Common, which harboured snipes in abundance: these, blent with recollections of sport and frolic, are all erased, and, although unessential to the landscape, they were among the treasures which surrounded the poet's summer dwelling.

The period of the year at which I visited Elleray did not encourage me to attempt angling from the boat, in the way it is usually practised on Windermere, but along with my friend, the Professor's eldest son, I took occasional rambles rod in hand up and down the neighbouring becks. Troutbeck, as my diary records, was the subject of several visits. The Rothay and Brathay, along with a portion of the river Derwent, etc., were tested, in the course of a short pedestrian excursion, sketched out *vivâ voce* by the Professor, over the Lake district. On the occasion of this ramble the sport met with was very unsatisfactory, and tended



to leave an unfavourable impression of the streams mentioned; but being pursued by me under disadvantages, I am not entitled to form from it any estimate of their capabilities as trouting waters. Of Troutbeck I had a better opportunity of judging, being under the guidance, in fishing it, of my friend and old Billy; and, moreover, having the good fortune to find it more than once in prime 'fettle.' It was the season of the year when the large trout of Windermere took opportunity, on the occurrence of a flood, to leave the lake and ascend to spawning quarters. In these days it was not, as at present, and very properly, held injurious to the stock, or out of character with fair sport, to angle for them, when so employed. In fact, however, they were not to be taken readily out of the lake itself, when at their prime, unless with nets; nor in Troutbeck at any other period than the fall of the year. It was considered also that such as were caught by the rod and line—a mere trifle in point of numbers to what were secured by other devices—showed some condition; and I still retain the recollection of two specimens of the Windermere trout, taken by my friend from Troutbeck on one of these occasions, which, when cooked, were red-fleshed, curdy, and palatable; nor, in respect to shape or external appearance, could any exception be taken to them. Holding the purpose of the trout, however, at that season in view, I am far from defending the impolicy of angling for them, and feel unwilling to have my opinions on this subject misinterpreted, by allying them with the thoughtless indiscretions of more inexperienced days. The two trout above mentioned, three-pounders at least, were the only ones which we had the hap to come across, or found in taking humour. I still bear in recollection the odd terms made use of by Billy Balmer, on the capture of one of them, which had displayed more than a common degree of boldness and voracity while seizing and bolting the worm. 'He bees a gorgeous tyke,' meaning a greedy fellow, 'and a rite

gud 'un,' was the compliment paid by our worthy attendant on committing it to the pannier.

## THE BRETHREN OF THE STREAMS.

### I.

A JOLLY craft is ours, hurra !  
The brethren of the streams !  
In joy we pass the livelong day,  
And close it under dreams.  
The chiming river is our guide,  
Meandering through the vale,  
And from its chimes we cull the rhymes  
Of legendary tale.

### II.

The secrets of the river's life  
Are ours to gain and guard,  
We are the priests who in the strife  
The angler join and bard ;  
Who blend with every wayward turn  
Some feat of the olden times,  
And the sweet prattle of the burn  
Interpret into rhymes.

### III.

It is a pleasant one, and free,  
This wandering sport of ours,  
Above us waves the leafy tree,  
Bloom under us the flowers ;  
And in our hands the pliant rod  
Is waving to and fro,  
The shapely boughs above us nod ;  
And the flowers smile below.

## IV.

We love the angler's quiet lot—  
His meditative art—  
The fancies in the hour of thought  
That bud out from his heart.  
All other things we 'll cast behind,  
Let strife of place alone,  
And flinging care unto the wind,  
We 'll angle—angle on !

With my visit to Ellaray in 1831, it will not be out of place to consort a few jottings relative to another, extending over five or six weeks, which I paid to Thirlstane House, on the banks of the Ettrick, in 1834. The noble proprietor of Thirlstane, Lord Napier, was at that time in his minority, and the trustees, in the exercise of their discretionary powers, had let the house and shootings to Professor Wilson, with whose family I had received a kind invitation to pass a week or two. The recollection of this visit, prolonged until the middle of October, I cherish with fondness, but it is only in its association with sport that I feel at liberty to dwell upon it.

The entries made in my angling diary, in that respect, are certainly not very numerous. To the Ettrick and its feeders, far advanced as the season was, it appears that, in company with my friend, the Professor's eldest son, I now and then devoted portion of a forenoon. This only happened, however, when the weather was adverse in the extreme to the pursuit of the feathered tribe, to indulge in which we had at command an extent of territory, independent of the Thirlstane estates, such as scarcely made it necessary to pass twice in the fortnight over the same beat. I may mention, by the way, that the Ettrick and its supplies, during September, are not, in respect to the condition of their trout, to be judged of by the Tweed, or even the Yarrow.

In the case of the Timah and Rankle-burn, its chief feeders, the month named is, properly speaking, their season, and the trout then found in them are much better conditioned than those of May, June, and July. This is the case in many of our hill burns; but, at the same time, it must be admitted that the condition arrived at in autumn by the finny population of the higher and strictly pastoral districts of country is very inferior, at the best, to that attained by the trout of our cultivated valleys in the spring months.

It was about the time of my visit to Thirlstane that intelligence was brought to Professor Wilson of the serious illness of Mr. Blackwood, the eminent publisher, whose name is still retained in the designation of the firm. This illness, which terminated fatally, was the occasion of great anxiety to the Professor, betwixt whom and Mr. Blackwood, independent of their connexion as conductors of the Magazine, there had existed a friendship of long standing. It involved him also in an extra amount of editorial labour, so that it was but seldom he could find heart or leisure to take an active part in those out-of-door recreations which the heights of Ettrick invite to. He showed, however, a strong interest in them, and was usually present at the emptying of the game-bags or fishing-creels on the conclusion of the day's sport. On these occasions the variety and condition of the feathered, furred, and scaly spoils became themes of lively comment. The glossy plumage of this or that old blackcock, the rich pedal feathering of some male grouse struck down among the hags of the Ward Law, the bright colouring of the mallard; such points of attraction as the snipe, the golden plover, the partidge, the landrail, the hare, the trout, the pike, and the perch presented, were all and severally made subjects of remark, which, in point of felicity, bore a kind of resemblance to the master-strokes of a Landseer or other great animal painter. Our after-dinner discourse, also, was frequently directed by him into the

details of the day's amusement, and interspersed with anecdote bearing upon his own sporting experience.

In the establishment at Thirlstane, Billy Balmer officiated, as far as his growing infirmities permitted, in the capacity of game-keeper. Billy was no longer, it is true, the shrewd, dexterous, and contriving little soul he had been; but he could still make himself serviceable in many ways, and had preserved to him intact the instinct which could point out where game was most likely to be found, or where a large trout had taken up its quarters. As the caterer for bait, in the shape of minnows and worms, he was invaluable. The former he possessed the knack, by means of a sort of spirt-net or caralet, of securing by the shoal, and always kept replenished a large perforated box, sunk in one of the pools of Thirlstane burn, with some scores of these little fish, in case of emergency. To a reasonable extent also the old man's shoulders could stand the weight of the game-bag; although it was only when hunting the haughs and partridge-grounds that it was considered not unmerciful treatment to put them to the test.

There was one special source of delight to this transportation from the wilds of Westmoreland to those of Ettrick-head, in the way of sport, which carried infection along with it, and secured frequently the presence of the Professor, along with that of his family and guests, as eye-witnesses of Billy's piscatory skill. It consisted in the setting and drawing of an eel-line of great length, and armed with several scores of hooks variously baited. At the entrance of the avenue leading to Thirlstane, the river Ettrick approaches the main road, and forms, almost in proximity with it, a pool of considerable extent and unusual depth. Besides being the well-known resort of salmon, and the choice abode of yellow trout, this stretch of calm water gives accommodation of the best sort to the common fresh-water eel, a fish which is still looked upon with distaste and aversion by the

generality of our Scottish peasantry; indeed, I heard it once declared by a sturdy Lowlander, that he 'wud as sune grip an ether as ane o' thae sliddery craturs.'

Here it was that Billy, twice in the week at least, made a display of his address in laying the set-line, an operation which, although it implied infinitely less labour than the paying out of an Atlantic cable, required some degree of nicety in the execution, as well as an accurate acquaintance with the humours and *habitats* of the fish he had to deal with. His method of going to work, taken along with the general result, proved this; and I am inclined to question if, from any Scottish river, there had ever previously been abstracted, by the same means, such numbers of fine eels. Out of this one pool, several huge creelfuls, comprising many prime specimens, were taken during the few weeks of my stay at Thirlstane. The result, in fact, of Billy's skill in disposing of his night line, so as to attract these slimy monsters, was something very extraordinary, and I retain, in consequence, a lively recollection of what took place on such occasions.

One of them, the last at which I happened to be present in company with the Professor, is remembered by me, the more distinctly, from the circumstance that, instead of the haul of eels we had been led to expect, the only fish which graced the set-line was a splendid trout, the king of the pool, weighing four or five pounds (a rare weight for the Ettrick), which, by its endeavours to free itself, had kept the other baits in a state of constant agitation, and so deterred the muds from showing teeth. The capture of this starry-side was quite a matter of triumph to our friend Billy, and gave excuse, no doubt, for an extra draught, long before sunset, of potent Edinburgh ale, which the old laker relished uncommonly, to the disparagement of every other beverage. At the period of my visit to Thirlstane, although to make up a bouncing bag from the slacks and hill-sides, rife with rushes

and ferns, was a matter of little difficulty, the game of the district was by no means, I have reason to think, so abundant as it is at present. On Lord Napier's property, which embraces three or four large sheep-farms, the birds, chiefly black-game, were but thinly scattered. Irregularities connected with it affected the distribution of the cover, and told on the day's sport. There was a great scarcity of heather, and the little there was flowered on the tops of the hills or laws, in the shape of a mere fringing to peat-hags, which were quarried in the summer months, shortly after or about hatching-time, by the shepherds, their dogs accompanying them. The grey fowl breeding-grounds incorporated with the district are mostly unexceptionable, and less liable to be disturbed. Those on the Thirlstane property furnish only an average illustration of the capabilities of Ettrick-head to produce and sustain black-game.

It is to the connecting ground of the forest with Dumfriesshire that we must look for a proper exemplification of these capabilities. The tract of country I allude to is rich in that peculiar herbage which this sort of game delights in. There are rushy sykes in abundance, bent, sprett, and moor grasses, ling and other mosses, the *Scirpus cæspitosus*, for instance; ferns, crow-berries, etc., along with our common heaths. On some of the pens or laws is found the cloud or nubb-berry, *Rubus chamæmorus*. The cranberry, also, is a native of this range of territory. Both these fruits are highly relished by grouse and black-game, and exercise, each in its season, as inviting an influence over them as the corn-stubbles do in the month of October.

Across a portion of this choice circle of sporting ground, Christopher North and party, when at Thirlstane, enjoyed permission from the proprietor, his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, to carry the gun; and I frequently, under sanction of this privilege, accompanied my friend in his excursions in that direction.

The Gair, or Gairhill, was the name of the farm or shooting-ground thus courteously tendered by his Grace. It lies on the confines of Selkirkshire, near the sources of the Timah ; Eskdale Moor spreading out immediately below it, in a south-westerly direction. Although in the vicinity of the black-game district above described, the Gair is more adapted for the rearing of moorfowl, and at the time I speak of was numerously stocked, but not more so, I have reason to think, than at present, with red grouse. Its provision of heather is tolerably ample, but the situation is too elevated and exposed to admit of successful covey-shooting after the first of September, when the birds usually throughout the Borderland become packed, and are not to be approached without ceremony. I missed, in consequence, the principal run of sport met with by my friend in this quarter, the season being in reality gone by. Two or three brace of good birds, however, he generally contrived to mystify ; and as a portion of the intervening ground betwixt the Gair and Thirlstane was open to him, the shyness of the grouse seldom interfered with the making up, before dusk, of a plump bag.

A somewhat singular, but not, I understand, an unprecedented incident occurs to my recollection, as having been met with on one of these occasions. We were crossing a hill-top clad with heather and wild grasses, when the dog suddenly caught scent, and after having followed it up for seven or eight hundred yards at the pace of a fox-hound, came all at once to a dead point. On my friend nearing him, puzzled to know what his favourite setter had been running, up sprung an old cock pheasant, which was knocked down, almost *instanter*, as it took wing. The singularity of the occurrence lay simply in this, that the nearest pheasant covers, those at Langholm Lodge, and at Bowhill, are situated, as the crow flies, at a distance of sixteen or seventeen miles from the spot where it happened.



## OUR CHOICE.

## I.

WHERE torrents foam,  
While others roam  
Among the Norland heather,  
Some river meek  
We 'll forth and seek,  
And lay our lines together.

## II.

Some sylvan stream  
Where shade and gleam  
Are blending with each other ;  
Below whose bank  
The lilies lank  
All humbler flowers ensmother.

## III.

Where cushats coo  
And ring-doves woo  
The shining channel over,  
From leafy larch  
Or birchen arch—  
Their unmolested cover.

## IV.

There daily met,  
No dark regret  
Shall cloud our noon of pleasure !  
We 'll carry rule  
O'er stream and pool,  
And heap the finny treasure.

## v.

With rare deceits  
And cunning treats,  
Minnow and creeper tender,  
We shall invite  
The scaly wight  
To eye them and surrender.

## vi.

And, when sport-worn,  
We'll seek some thorn,  
With shadow cool and ample ;  
The natural ground,  
Moss-laid around,  
An angler's resting temple !

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A STROLL BY THE WATERS OF THE SOLWAY.

OF the rivers which are most in the way of becoming benefited by recent salmon legislation, I would point with confidence to those having direct communication with the Solway Firth. Passing through Scottish territory, the Esk, the Annan, the Nith, and the Dee hold among them a prominent place. They are what may be called second-class streams, and although pressing from the same lie of coast towards one estuary, differ very much in character. I have fished them all, but am best acquainted with the Esk, at one time a favourite resort of the migratory *Salmones*, especially of sea-trout, but a river which, in conjunction with its principal feeder, the Liddel, has suffered more from drainage and want of proper protection during close-

time, than any of the others ; its waters generally being clear and shallow, devoid, in a large measure, of refuge-places for the breeding fish in dry weather, and subject, in the event of floods, to changes in the position of its gravel-beds. All the way from Eskdale Moor, past Castle-O'er, Westerkirk, Burnmouth, Langholm Lodge, and Canobie, down to Longtown, it promises well to the eye, but very rarely fulfils the expectations of the smitten angler. The scenery, in fact, is the best part of it, and atones largely for its shortcomings in other respects, yet why it should not combine good sport with an attractiveness of character pertaining to its banks and braes, rarely surpassed, there is no satisfactory reason. It is certainly not what may be called a fertile stream, so far as yellow trout are concerned, but its capacities for holding the migratory species of the genus *Salmo* are pretty fair, and taking into account that there are few disturbing or vitiating elements in connexion with its course, I can see no reason why, under proper management, it should not recover a large portion of its lost repute as an angling river. My successes on it, and I have fished it pretty regularly for nearly twenty years, have never been very great. In the matter of river-trout, eight or ten pounds in the course of a forenoon may be quoted as an average. Such sea-trout as I have taken from its casts have rarely exceeded one-and-a-half pounds, the generality of them, in the shape of bills or whitens, seldom weighing more than half a pound. That the Esk will improve, however, under the new arrangements entered into by the proprietors on its banks (the principal of whom are Sir Frederick Graham of Netherby, and his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch) with the Commissioners of Salmon Fishings, I make no question.

Compared with the Esk, the Annan is a river of far greater resources, and infinitely better holding capacities. It also, as a breeding stream, has been greatly abused ; and the exercise of a very strict surveillance on its upper channels will be required in

order to restore it to its ancient condition. From Wamphray downwards it presents a succession of fine salmon-casts, which, if tenanted, and made more accessible to the angler by judicious thinnings here and there along the densely wooded banks, would rival those of Tweed itself.

On the 9th of August 1862, while trouting in that quarter, I was so attracted by their appearance as to become induced, on ascertaining that on the Annandale property free permission to angle for salmon was accorded to the public, to attach a small grilse-fly to my line. I had not taken a dozen throws before I raised a fish, and shortly afterwards hooked, ran, and landed a fine salmon of twelve pounds; to it succeeded a grilse of seven pounds; and I had also the satisfaction of playing, though not of securing, another fish, apparently of the same weight. The Annan has the advantage over both the Esk and the Nith, in being supplied, during its course, from numerous feeders, which help to enlarge and vary the extent of its breeding-grounds.

Of the Nith, and its chances of being restored under the new Solway Act, I cannot augur quite so favourably. It labours under a number of disadvantages not endured by its sister stream. Its tideway, for instance, is more confined, and made use of by vessels trading in lime, coal, etc.; it receives the sewage of a large town pregnant with manufacturing schemes; the course of those fish which incline to ascend it is impeded at Dumfries by a cauld-dyke of considerable height; it is not sustained, to any amount, by important tributaries possessing eligible spawning-grounds; and the main river itself, before passing through the policy-grounds at Drumlanrig, waters a tract of country in which lead-mines are worked, and which is known to be inimical to the existence even of the *fario* itself.

The Dee, in Galloway, so far as I could judge of it in the course of a fortnight's trial in July 1862, is one of those rivers of which it may be pronounced that it moves *per se* among our

Scottish waters. It is certainly unlike any river I am acquainted with. In the lower part of its course, from the bridge of Kelton downwards, its celebrity as a salmon-stream has been long established, but of its capabilities higher up no proper test has been made. The range, both on the Dee proper, and in connexion with the banks of the Ken (the larger and more direct body of water), is very extensive, and includes what may be called a series of lakes. In these expanses pike and perch are known to abound; but they form also, it has been ascertained, holds or resting-places, at particular points, for salmon, which, under certain conditions of wind and water, take the fly freely. By means of a careful investigation, these resorts, it struck me, might readily enough be determined, and the field of sport with the rod greatly enlarged in consequence. The Dee, in its middle levels and lower course, is, comparatively speaking, poorly stocked with river-trout. Individuals, however, of large dimensions, are occasionally taken from it. During my visit to it in 1862, I was favoured with two or three days' salmon-fishing in the neighbourhood of Tongland, and higher up, and was successful in capturing seven fish, the largest a salmon of about twelve pounds, the others grilse varying from five to seven pounds, all of them freshly-run and in the best condition. The flies insisted on by the local anglers were all of the reddish-brown or dun-wing pattern, a few fibres of the speckled drake-feather being occasionally introduced below the wing, for the purpose of enlivening it, and a dark body, shouldered, in some instances, with jay or guinea-fowl, tinselled with silver, and tipped with orange or bright yellow, held in regard. I found some of our Tweed patterns, however, fully as persuasive,—the Sutton-fly, for instance, and the double white-top. My brother, who resides at Carlinwark, in Kirkcudbrightshire, and has fished the Dee regularly for a number of years, puts equal faith with the Tweed-siders in the old-fashioned but well-tried lure last mentioned.

In the poem entitled 'The Angler's Ramble,' etc., I have alluded to Thrieve Castle in connexion with this river. The ruin in question invites regard from its having been one of the strongholds of the Earls of Douglas, and the last which, after the Act of Forfeiture had been passed against them in 1455 by the Scots Parliament, held out for that ambitious and designing family. It stands on what was formerly an island surrounded by the Dee, about three miles from the town of Castle-Douglas; and in its present state, impresses the beholder with more than ordinary feelings of desolateness and neglect. It was for the purpose of reducing this fortress that the celebrated piece of ordnance, Mons Mэг, was constructed, at a spot called Buchan's Croft, in the vicinity of the 'Three Thorns of Carlinwark,' where James II. took up his position with a numerous army, and directed the siege. A shrewd old blacksmith of the name of M'Kim, observing the insufficiency of the king's artillery to effect a breach, took upon himself to manufacture a gun of the requisite power, and, with the assistance of his stalwart sons, materials being furnished him, produced the monster engine in question. Mons Meg, a corruption of Mollance Meg, the name of the blacksmith's wife, was with some difficulty, owing to its immense weight,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  tons, brought into position. At its first discharge, the foundations of the castle were said to have been violently shaken, and the garrison thrown into a state of great alarm. At the second, the granite ball, described to be of the weight of a Carsphairn cow, passed through the walls, and carried away the right hand of the Countess, the fair maid of Galloway, as she was in the act, at the head of the banqueting-hall, of raising the wine-cup to her lips. With Mons Meg and the ponderous missile which played such a singular part in the annals of war, every one who has visited Edinburgh Castle is well acquainted.

## MY FISHER LAD.

## I.

I LO'E my ain wee fisher-boy,  
He's bold and bonnie—bonnie an' bold ;  
An' aye there is a glint o' joy  
A' nestlin' 'mang his locks o' gold.

## II.

His gad is o' the rowan-tree,  
That grows below the castle wa',  
The rowan wi' its bleeze o' beads,  
Sae braw and bonnie—bonnie and braw.

## III.

His creel is o' the rashes green,  
I waled them wi' a carefu' han',  
An' pletted them, ae simmer e'en,  
An' croon'd them wi' a luve-knot gran'.

## IV.

I lo'e, I lo'e my fisher-lad,  
He's aye sae blate, and aye sae cheery ;  
I lo'e the sughing o' his gad,  
An' nane but him shall ca' me dearie !

## V.

I lo'e him for his sunny e'e,  
Sae blue an' sunny—sunny an' blue ;  
'There's glitterin' starns 'neath mony a bree,  
But nane sae tender or sae true.

## VI.

I lo'e him for his gentle airt,  
Wi' line and angle—angle and line ;  
He's captive ta'en my silly heart  
This bonnie fisher-lad o' mine !

## THE DROUGHT OF 1864.

THE extent to which high farming is at the present day carried on in our Border valleys, to the prejudice, eventually, I cannot help thinking, of the landowners and the community at large, leads, in connexion with the following verses, to a few remarks. That the application of lime, manures, and chemical substances, to the soil, is a legitimate and necessary mode of treating it, in combination with the usual farm processes, I am quite ready to admit. It is only, in fact, by the liberal use of these adjuncts that paying crops can be raised, and the exhausted capabilities of the tillage-grounds which furnish them restored or kept up to the mark. Such applications may, in some instances, not correspond in their effect to the results anticipated; but there is this to be said for them, that they rarely do permanent injury to the soil on which they are used; and only in certain instances, and that solely through the intervention of the draining system, so largely carried on by the moneyed tenantry of the day, are other interests affected by them.

It is to this draining mania (for the spirit with which draining operations are carried on has grown to be nothing less), that I would direct my remarks. As a means of reclaiming waste land, and of improving soils overlying retentive subsoils, the utility of the drainage system stands unquestioned. When judiciously carried out and brought to bear upon places, the natural products of which, in the shape of rushes and rank herbage, betray the underlying presence of water, the improvements which result cannot be too highly estimated. But, on the other hand, the application of the system universally, without regard being paid to the requirements of the soil, or to the results which that application may bring about (results, be it noticed, when pernicious, not merely of a temporary or remedial nature, but permanent



and irretrievable), is much to be condemned. I fear, however, that it has been already carried to an extreme in our Borderland; and I would warn loudly the landed proprietors and their tenantry, in the more backward districts of Scotland, against rashly prosecuting a system which, although they may profit by it for the moment, cannot fail to depreciate the value of the tillage-grounds, and affect, beyond repair, the future interests of their holders.

Of the misapplication of the system in question, on Tweed-side, I could adduce a number of instances, were it prudent to do so.

In those cases where improvident and expensive operations have been conducted at his individual outlay, it is upon the tenant that the primary loss falls. The mischief done at length becomes entailed, in a permanent form, at the throwing up or expiry of the lease, on the land itself, the juicy virtues of which have been disturbed and abstracted. But not only are the lessee and his landlord made sufferers by so improvident and violent a method of dealing with the subsoils, the community also are brought in to bear their share of the consequences. Am I asked how? I point, without hesitation, to the present state of our rivers during the greater part of the year, contrasting with it their former condition when the system of thorough drainage was, comparatively speaking, in its infancy. A noble river like the Tweed, running, with its numerous feeders, through the heart of a thickly populated district,—a river famed of old for the fulness and purity of its waters, not to speak of their riches in the shape of salmon, trout, and other fish, which afford food and sport to an extent almost fabulous—such a river is surely not a subject for desecration and abuse, such as it receives to a large and increasing extent, at the hands of the tenantry on its banks, in the strange belief that the grand secret of remunerative farming consists, under every circumstance, of disturbing the subsoils. It is to the draining mania which at present prevails, in con-

nexion with the pasturage-lands and tillage-grounds of the Borders, that are to be traced, without question, these droughts to which, during the summer and autumnal months, the whole range of our valley land has become statedly subject. Five-and-twenty years ago such phenomena were of rare occurrence. Tweed could then be relied on as affording opportunities, during the grilse season, for thousands of fine fish to ascend its waters as high as Innerleithen. At St. Boswell's Fair, which is held on the 18th July, the caterers for the entertainment of its frequenters were not dependent, as they now are, for their supply of salmon from Berwick-on-Tweed, but could trust to its being furnished to them from the fisheries in the upper reaches of the river, those in the vicinity of Kelso, if not of St. Boswell's Green. Such has not been the case for a number of seasons. Other reasons may be given, but the main one is that the fish now-a-days are not there. For the last twelve years and upwards, owing to the droughts entailed upon the river, they have had no opportunity, save as stragglers, to ascend higher than Tweedmill, situated three or four miles below Coldstream; and not before the nets are laid aside in the middle of September, nor even then, unless floods actually occur, do they show face in any quantity in the higher stretches of Tweed.

The community and fishing interests being beyond a doubt prejudiced by the wholesale system in operation, the question may be put, Are they bound to submit to it, or rather, seeing that it has been submitted to so long, with the faintest show of protest, have they the power to arrest it? I cannot but foresee the time when it will become a subject of national regret that no steps had been taken at the proper juncture to sustain the repute of our noble river, and rescue it from a fate similar to what has befallen many of the finest streams in our sister-land, associated, like Tweed, with events of historical interest, and at one time teeming with salmon.

Another evil resulting from thorough drainage—one which I believe has hitherto escaped remark—is the enormous increase of rabbits in the districts where it has been carried on, and that, be it observed, in teeth of the most strenuous efforts to keep them down; and I may add, notwithstanding the demand made for them, and so largely responded to, as our poulterers' shops can testify, as an article of table consumption. No one requires to be twice told, that the immense number and stretch of cavities formed even over a single farm under the system protested against, furnish both harbour and breeding-ground for what the agriculturists themselves have proclaimed to be a nuisance of the worst description.

## THE DROUGHT OF 1864, HOW IT AFFECTED THE ANGLER.

### PART I.

#### I.

THE lips of all the springs are dry,  
And parch'd the throats of every rill;  
A fiery shape hath scaled the hill  
With blistering foot and brazen eye.

#### II.

A fiery shape hath cross'd the lea,  
And trodden out its summer life,  
Filling the hags with fetid stife,  
And staggers onward to the sea.

#### III.

Within the range of its regard,  
Drop silenced all the tongues of mirth;  
Aspiring flowers crouch back to earth,  
The emeralds of the mead lie charr'd.

## IV.

His thirsty tooth the gad-fly whets,  
Incited by the cruel glare ;  
The spider wrapt in crafty lair  
Watches the flutter of her nets.

## V.

The lizard basks upon the bank ;  
The slow-worm in our pathway crawls ;  
The loathly adder, on the knolls,  
Lies coil'd among the herbage rank.

## VI.

All nature wears an air of spleen—  
A cast of languor, not repose,  
That in the season of the rose  
Seems alien to her wonted mien.

## VII.

Upon the feather'd tribe, the charm  
Works in a more or less degree ;  
The swallow, which hath cross'd the sea,  
Within the circuit of the farm

## VIII.

Shows flagging wing. The doves retire  
Below the curtains of the grove,  
And in the under-tones of love  
Communicate their one desire.

## IX.

With furled canvas, under thatch  
Of a desponding willow, stands,  
Like the carved work of cunning hands,  
The heron keeping weary watch.

## X.

The valley's glory broad and bright,  
Which flash'd with life the May-month long,  
And with its challenges of song  
Saluted the starr'd ear of night,

## XI.

Has shrunk into a narrow thread,  
Or, if assuming ampler course,  
It still affects the river's force,  
The life and song alike are fled.

## XII.

The valley's glory now no more,  
So straiten'd are its ways and means,  
So cast the tints—the golds and greens—  
Which ranged across from shore to shore.

## XIII.

So lazily the pulses beat,  
Which once their merry throb sent out,  
And stirr'd the hidings of the trout  
And wing'd the river's twinkling feet,

## XIV.

And buoy'd with promises of cheer  
The angler's heart, like sough of corn,  
That with the breezes of the morn  
Comes flowing on the sower's ear.

## XV.

Alas! the angler's hopes fall crush'd,  
Arrested in their radiant flight  
His aspirations of delight,  
Their music and persuasion hush'd.

## XVI.

The weapon of his prowess lies  
Neglected. The grey moth invades  
His feathery stores ; the beauty fades  
From his prospective paradise.

## XVII.

And languor, such as reigns without,  
Enters into his inmost soul,  
And by its pressure, past control,  
Puts every longing to the rout.

## XVIII.

Even the soft, seducing dawn  
Allures not with its temper'd hues ;  
Nor yet the shedding of the dews  
Across the carpet of the lawn ;

## XIX.

Nor yet the rustling of the trees,  
The conference of oak with oak,  
That ushers in the midnight stroke,  
And predicates the showery breeze.

## XX.

A strange, low wind, without an airt,  
A whispering of leafy sprites,  
The running to and fro of lights  
Mysterious, through the forests' heart.

## XXI.

Such held their influence till now—  
The wildfire and the Dryad's talk,  
The steppings in the river's walk,  
The plumelike beckonings of the bough.

## XXII.

But the old faith, which fondly clung  
To signs and omens, is disturb'd ;  
The tide of superstition curb'd  
That wander'd betwixt heart and tongue.

## XXIII.

Ay ! even his wishes lie repell'd  
By the fierce furnace overhead,  
Or reach the lips, to die unsaid ;  
So sunk the heart from which they well'd.

## XXIV.

Oh ! quickly melt, ye skies of brass !  
Drop, cruel heav'ns, your crystal stores !  
Open at length the long-barr'd doors,  
And let the glad libation pass !

## XXV.

Relent apace, oh ! eye of day  
That blazing smitest, like a sword  
Grasp'd by an angel of the Lord,  
And give the brimming tears their way !

## XXVI.

Ye eyes of night ! a token bring,  
Entreat for us, thou Dian chaste !  
The coursers of the watery waste,  
And round thee bind thy mystic ring.

## XXVII.

The cloud no bigger than a hand,  
Awaits thy signal in the West,  
Ready to do thy high behest,  
And roll salvation o'er the land.

## XXVIII.

Oh ! welcome rain, oh ! welcome rain !  
Welcome the smile-precursing tears—  
The weeping of the clouds and spheres  
Which, pass'd, restores to life again,

## XXIX.

Freshens the hues of eve and morn—  
Dilates the humid orbs of night,  
And from the treasures of light  
Replenishes the lunar horn !

## XXX.

I hear it coming in my sleep  
From cloudland and the vast behind ;  
From the four Castles of the Wind,  
From the green caverns of the deep.

## XXXI.

I hear it coming, as they came  
That are the messengers of God,  
And harness'd chariots at his nod,—  
Horses of cloud to wheels of flame.

## XXXII.

The vision that so often pass'd  
Before me, fraught of longings vain—  
The wishes of the heart and brain—  
Is surely realized at last !

## XXXIII.

Oh ! welcome rain, oh ! welcome rain !  
Welcome the quickenings all around  
The cloud-drift and the moaning sound,  
The shiftings of the gilded vane !



## XXXIV.

The ringings as of liquid bells  
That break the silence overhead,  
And hovering o'er the river's bed  
Set bubbling the enchanted wells.

## XXXV.

Hands feebly dropt are raised again—  
Tongues loosen'd to make thankful prayer—  
Hearts cheer'd—eyes lighten'd everywhere ;  
Oh ! welcome rain ! oh ! welcome rain !

## PART II.

## I.

Oh ! angler, thine experience tell,  
In faulty rhymes, of this fierce drought,  
How it prevail'd within, without  
And chain'd thee with its weary spell.

## II.

Speak to the reason running wild  
Of those who waste our valley's wealth,  
And on the crystal tide of health  
Cast things defiling and defiled ;

## III.

Who drain the juices of our land,  
Reckless of what the need may be  
To us and to posterity,  
So that the profit comes to hand.

## IV.

Counting but for themselves alone  
The cost and chances of reward ;  
But taking into no regard  
The future of the evil done.

## V.

How fountains broken up and spilt—  
The life-blood driven from the soil,  
Never to be restored by toil—  
Commit to the reward of guilt.

## VI.

All honour to the noble art  
Which into corn transmutes the weed,  
And turns the waste into the mead,—  
The alchemy of hand and heart !

## VII.

But woe to those who so abuse  
The license given to scourge and drain,  
As, in their fell pursuit of gain,  
All sight of what may come to lose !

## VIII.

Who of its fragrance rob the wold,  
And of its wild-flowers strip the hill ;  
Who check the frolics of the rill,  
And push it from its courses old ;

## IX.

To Nature's remnant laying siege,  
And, under guise of tenant skill,  
Rake God's own garden with a will,  
Committing conscious sacrilege.

## X.

God speed the honest mill, and feed  
Its merry spokes by night and day !  
The rivers as they dance away  
Repeat the blessing, God it speed !

## XI.

The trout within the dam and lead  
Love the sweet clatter of its wheel,  
And with its flushings forth reveal  
Their joy, and bid it—the God speed ;

## XII.

But let a malison descend  
Upon those structures of the day,  
That with palatial display  
Shadow our streams at every bend !

## XIII.

Those strongholds of monopoly  
That mar the pictures of the mind,  
And come betwixt us and the wind,  
Tainting its natural purity ;

## XIV.

Which, to allay the thirst of fire  
That hugs their vitals, and torments,  
Drink in a valley's whole contents,  
And sputter out a rush of mire.

## XV.

Must this great wrong pass unredress'd—  
This rifling of our valley's wealth—  
This wanton tampering with health,  
And no one venture to protest ?

## XVI.

Shall it go on from bad to worse,  
Until all remedy is past,  
And we conniving stand aghast,  
Partakers of the withering curse ?

## XVII.

'Tis the Bard's privilege to foresee—  
His bounden duty to forewarn ;  
Thus prompted, I uplift the horn,  
And signal the calamity.

## XVIII.

The cry for corn was late abroad—  
The cry for cheap, untrammell'd bread ;—  
For the big quartern blood was shed,  
And the great cry went up to God !

## XIX.

*That* cry hath ceased ; but in its place  
Threatens to come the fiercer cry,  
Give us pure water else we die,  
And, dying, curse you to the face !

## XX.

Arrest the evil while you may,  
Nor pause to argue, on the plea  
That to advance utility  
Is the first duty of the day,—

## XXI.

That interests where selfish strife  
Goes hand in hand with factory pride,  
Admit of claims which set aside  
The grave necessities of life.

## XXII.

With air and fire at their control,  
And the electric power divine,  
Why trespass on the Naiad's shrine  
These taskers of the hand and soul ?

## XXIII.

Forbid it, ye strong powers that be !  
Arrest the evil while you can,  
And let not the Leviathan  
Swallow the tribute of the sea.

## XXIV.

Its rivers are a nation's trust—  
The people's dearest heritage,  
Which it is bound from age to age  
To hold inviolate from lust ;

## XXV.

With jealousy the fountain-heads  
To fend against all reckless waste ;  
Nor suffer elements unchaste  
To dim the diamond of their beds.

## XXVI.

Up and be busy, ye to whom  
This sacred duty appertains !  
Our rivers rescue from their chains,  
And snatch from their impending doom.

## XXVII.

No weary drought will vex them then,  
No fiery shape invade the lea ;  
But salmon riches crowd the sea,  
And roll up to our doors again.

## XXVIII.

The mill and farm will thrive apace,  
And with them peer and peasant both ;  
Only repel the Hun and Goth,  
And meet the Vandal face to face.

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## THE OTTER OF OUR BORDERS.

To every angler of standing who subscribeth not to the spirit of the song—

‘Up in the morning’s no for me,  
Up in the morning early!’

the otter is a familiar animal. Whether on purling brook, or broad shining river, or crystal lake, or sedgy fish-pond, it may be his chance to fall in with this crafty rival, I shall not call it foe. Why regard it even as a rival? I know but few anglers of the sterling sort who do so. Its presence as a creature of beauty on our waters, is desired rather than objected to. It forms, in common with the heron, sea-gull, water-ousel, and king-fisher, all enemies to the scaly tribe, one of the attractions of the river-side. Bereft of the otter, our waters would lose a large portion of their interest; so too would our mountains, were the death-dirge of the last of their eagles sounded on Ben More of Assynt, and an exterminating policy had struck the raven, the wild-cat, and the badger off the catalogue of Highland vermin.

The otter is welcome, for my part, to its full share of the sport going, and its bit of fish into the bargain. I do not quite coincide, however, with my friend, the late Mr. Andrew Young of

Invershin, in his estimate of its deservings. He carried, I must say, his partiality for the *lutra* a little too far. Some of his notions were expressed before the Committee of the House of Commons sitting on the Tweed Bill, in 1857. They are not, I believe, incorporated as evidence in the report of the investigation, having been elicited from him in order to gratify the curiosity of one or two members, at the conclusion of the day's inquiry. If I mistake not, Mr. Young placed the otter in a most estimable light, shielding it strenuously from the imputation of being an enemy to the salmon; nay, he even went so far as to affirm that a salmon-river is all the better of being harried regularly by this animal, and that its occupancy of a retreat on the banks of a water having the above-mentioned reputation, acts as a check upon the increase of river-trout, and prevents much of the mischief done by these intermeddlers during the breeding season. But here are his own words, taken from *The Natural History of the Salmon*:—

‘The otter is a most wonderful and useful creature in a salmon-river, and yet its usefulness is but little known. It has long been represented as one of the salmon’s worst enemies, while in truth it is one of their best friends. It is true that the otter will, at very rare times, hunt and kill a salmon; but this only happens in cases of severe necessity; only at times when frosts or other natural causes have debarred it from the lake or trout-pond. Indeed, it is very seldom that the otter will catch a salmon by fair hunting; for when hunger forces him on to the uncertain attempt, it is done more from cunning than from speed. He entices the salmon into some small or shallow corner, where escape is impossible, and there gets hold of it. But the only attempt to do so is when his easier managed neighbour, the trout, is not to be got at all; for when the rivers are open, and trout numerous, the otter has full sport, as he often hunts and kills more for amusement than for food; and he kills hundreds throughout the

season that he leaves whole on the banks of the rivers, not even taking out the "otter's bite." We have, in the space of half-an-hour, seen him lay a dozen of trout on the bank of one pool; he seemed to spring on them and catch them by stealth rather than by fair hunting; and, on the whole, otter-fishing seems to be a nice amusement, and therefore his value on a salmon-river must be very great. We would therefore recommend their strict protection, and not, as has been done formerly, almost drive them from the face of the earth. Save the otter, but destroy water-ousels and river-trout; and in due time,' etc.

Had Mr. Young resided on Tweedside, and devoted the same attention to the habits of our Lowland otter which he appears to have sought credit for having given to those of its congener in Sutherlandshire, he would not have been so very positive in regard to the favourite food of his amphibious friend, or estimated quite so highly its services as a skilful trout-slayer to the breeding salmon. I quite agree with him, that this animal, unless pressed by hunger, shows no great disposition to intermeddle with the grown-up *salar*. It seldom, considering its opportunities, does so. But is such forbearance, according to his own views, extended by it to the smolts? Or does the usual exercise thereof lead satisfactorily to the conclusion that the otter, on a salmon stream, will efficiently perform the duties of a protective? Of course, Mr. Young explains how it would do so, viz., by keeping the fresh-water trout under control; or, in other words, by thinning them out, and thereby, be it noted, forming a pretext for attacking the royal quarry. What, however, would Mr. Young have said to the fact, that on our Border rivers, where the otter abounds, its predatory demonstrations are almost entirely directed against the common eel, rarely indeed against the fresh-water trout? This is made known chiefly by an examination of its spraints or sealings, which invariably discover mixed up with them portions of the backbone of the *anguilla*. A thorough



acquaintance also with the reputed haunts of the otter on Tweed and its tributaries, leads to the conviction, that in the immediate vicinity of those lurking-places no extraordinary or wanton onslaught of river-trout is at any time in the way of being perpetrated. Many of those resorts I know well, and have occasionally, besides descrying the marks, seen otters at play close to them; but so far from discarding such localities as trouting-casts, I hold them, seeing they are generally furnished with under-bank shelter of the best description, in high esteem, and have often met with excellent sport, especially when dibbling with the natural fly and worm, at the throat of the animals' kennel. The pool below Teviot Bridge, near Kelso, the Castle Pool, Thorntree streams, and Upper Maisondieu, Heaton Millcauld, the Turn-pool, Ninewells, and Ormiston Water, all belonging to the lower portions of Teviot, share this character, and while they teem with trout are well-known *habitats* of the *lutra*.

Taking together the abundance of otters on Teviot and Tweedside, and the abundance of river-trout, I am quite persuaded that the former play but a sorry part in keeping down the latter. That they molest them to a certain extent, is probable enough. They disturb, if they do not actually molest, salmon as much; but the real slaughter committed is very trifling,—eels, frogs, snails, and herbs forming their chief food. From fishermen in the district who have paid attention to the habits of the otter, and from such of my friends as take delight in otter-hunting, I can elicit nothing in their whole experience corresponding to what has been affirmed by Mr. Young. Of the 'hundreds' of fresh-water trout caught by a single otter in the course of the season, and left intact on the rivers' banks, not one ever happened to fall either under their observation or my own. Our Lowland otters, it may be, are not quite so sportively inclined, nor so expert, as the Sutherlandshire ones. Possibly the eel-flesh they indulge in inclines to indolent habits. I have

never heard of an instance, at any rate, of the nocturnal prowler fetching to bank 'a dozen trout in the course of half an hour,' and, when I shall be so informed, I may expect to become further regaled with the relation of how these were salted and put aside for winter food by their clever and considerate captor. Mr. Young, in witnessing this feat on the part of the otter, has been peculiarly favoured.

It is certainly not an everyday occurrence, or a common exhibition of the dispositions of the animal, or indeed of any animal in the wild state. The weasel, with all its wicked pluck and blood-thirstiness, has never been accused of such wanton slaughter as Mr. Young has attributed to the otter, and magnified into a good office. That teathy despoiler of our waters, the pike, is quite an embodiment of clemency and moderation compared with those whiskered old Thugs whom my late friend at Invershin would intrust with the custodiership of our salmon-rivers. The sedgy skulker, with all the vice and ferocity imputed to him, never at least 'runs a-muck.' He kills to appease his appetite, not out of sport or sanguinary caprice; and although I don't like him as a craft cruising piratically among our Highland lakes and rivers, I must do him the justice to say that he is provident and forbearing, quite a paragon, in fact, of discretion and gentleness, compared with the otter of the North. Mr. Young, evidently, judging from the confident manner in which he spoke of its habits, shared in the belief—a somewhat prevalent one—that the otter has been driven by force of circumstances, exemplified, for instance, in the extended or extending scale of agricultural improvements, beyond the pale of common regard, into the secluded glens, rocky fastnesses, and undisturbed marshes of the upper Highlands; in other words, that there is no proper field of observation for its instincts and habits south of the Grampians. It may perhaps surprise the reader to be told that there are more otters at the present moment in occupation, as their

hunting-grounds, of Tweed and its feeders, than in the whole of Sutherlandshire; and that, so far from agricultural improvements having acted as a check upon their increase, these very improvements, with drainage at their head, have proved the stay and main support of the breed, if they have not, as I am inclined to think, increased it fourfold.

This I can affirm, that within the last five or six years, in the course of my river-side rambles, rarely undertaken at dusk or daybreak, I have come across more otters than it was my fortune to stumble on, throughout the previous portion of my angling career, when nocturnal and matutinal expeditions were of frequency.

While residing, in 1835-6, in the centre of the most romantic and finely-watered, as well as wooded district in Ross-shire, close to the Conon and Blackwater, the Meig and the Orrin, and in the vicinity of Lochs Garve, Luichart, Achilty, and numerous other lakes containing trout, pike, and char, my daily occupation, for nine or ten months, being fishing and studying the habits of wild animals, I do not recollect coming across, in the course of my wanderings, which not unfrequently commenced at daydawn and terminated after sunset, a single specimen of the web-footed fish-slayer. On the following year the scene of my pursuits was transferred to Nairn, and, while living there, I made excursions in all directions, without being favoured even with a fancied glimpse of the spoliator in question; nor at that period was there any report of its existence in circulation among the sporting community.

In the notes to *The Lays of the Deer-Forest*, by John Sobieski Stuart and his brother, an interesting account is given of the Findhorn otters; but I am not led by it to allot the preference to the Highlands as a stronghold of the *lutra mustela*. The note I allude to embraces the details of an incident which tends to upset Mr. Young's favourite notion as to the expediency of giving en-

couragement to otters on a salmon-river, and would lead me to infer that it is against the *salar*, in particular, they direct their hunting propensities. I cannot, however, subscribe to any such conclusion. With Mr. Young, I agree that the otter does not instinctively and habitually persecute or molest the salmon. It gives the preference, as far as its fish-diet is concerned, to much humbler fare, and it is only on occasions when the latter is not to be got that it will give chase to higher game. Where I directly differ from him is, as to the fresh-water trout being its favourite food, and the pursuit of it its favourite occupation.

Otters, as I have stated, so far from having become scarce among our Border rivers, are, owing in a great measure to the increased drainage, more abundant than they ever were; and, what may be held singular by those who look upon them as of a retiring, unsocial disposition, their chief haunts are not among the uplands and pastoral districts, but in the vicinity of towns and large villages. Thus, in the neighbourhood of Galashiels, the southern bank of that portion of Tweed which has its lye a short way above Abbotsford, known among salmon-fishers as the Glenmain Pool, is noted as a resort of this animal. The fisherman Geddes, employed on the Boldside casts, can speak as to the otters in that locality, being an expert trapper, and having in his day dealt no little damage to the breed. Farther down the river, in the vicinity of Melrose, and especially about the heights of Bemerside and Old Melrose, I have seldom failed to observe their tracks. Approaching Kelso, the Maxton, Rutherford, and Makerston waters give constant proof of their attachment to these sections of Tweed. The Elshie stream, in particular, is associated with their piscatorial raids.

Old Rob Kerss, a well-known character, the genius of the Trow Craggs, whose like on our Border river, or elsewhere, we shall never, I fear, look upon again, allowed every latitude to this sly 'rascal,' in the way of picking up a stray fish. Now and

then, however, the cubs, sometimes the old dodgers themselves, got entangled in his cairn-nets, and his mode of dealing with them on these occasions was, as may be imagined, pretty summary.

Our Grand Master, for I consider Rob to have been so in the art of salmon-fishing, among the strange happenings which befel him, used to descant upon the capture of a couple of otter cubs which had been decoyed by the glitter of some struggling fish, into one of his inset nets. No sooner had he drawn them to bank and taken hold of them, than, as if by magic, up shot from the depths of the Kill-mouth the bereaved mother. In a moment she clambered up the rocks, and Kerss had barely time, with his disengaged hand, the other grasping the cubs, to seize hold of a leister-shank, which fortunately lay within his reach, before she was close upon him, snapping with fury at his legs, and showing every determination to rescue her offspring. For a few moments Rob succeeded in warding her off, and was beginning to anticipate a safe retreat with his prize, when she laid hold of the pole with her teeth, and actually managed to wrest it from his grasp. The guard thus broken, our old friend's best policy, so he thought, in order to save his legs, was to come to terms with the animal by dropping one of her cubs, which he accordingly did, and a most compromising effect it produced, for no sooner had he quit-  
ted hold of the juvenile, than the amphibious dame, snatching it up, retraced her steps to the edge of the rock, over which she slid, and instantaneously disappeared with her recovered charge. 'I could easy hae managed them baith,' quoth Rob, 'by rinnin' awa frae the limmer, but faith I tuk a kind o' likin' to the auld besom, she stuck to me wi' sic freedom, and seemed sae unco wae about the bit cratur, I couldna help pleasin' her.'

## THE LAIRD'S CAST.

## I.

FAST, fast, we have him fast—  
A prime one by the gleam !  
In the auld Laird's shadowy cast  
Above the Elshie stream :  
'Tis a salmon plump and strong,  
Newly run from the flowing brine—  
Newly run, newly run—a right thundering one—  
Tell him line !

## II.

Away, he darts away  
Across the gleaming Tweed ;  
Nor art nor arm can stay  
The glorious creature's speed :  
From our reel the swift line flies,  
As he feels the galling scar,  
And in vain, all in vain, shakes his length'ning chain  
From afar !

## III.

To shore, slow draw to shore ;  
The light boat edges in,  
While moves the cautious oar,  
Like some sea-prowler's fin,  
In the creeks of an Indian isle ;  
Now the flowery bank we've gain'd,  
And in hand, firm in hand, with our labouring wand  
Hold him chain'd.

## IV.

See, see in fierce despair  
He seeks by frantic spring  
To snap the yielding hair,  
To fly the madd'ning string,  
In vain, all in vain, his headlong plunge !  
For the fatal die is cast  
O'er his eyelids soon death's glimmering swoon  
Shall have pass'd.

## V.

With quick revolving hand  
The good line home we wind,  
While obedient to our wand  
The worn fish floats behind ;  
And the bright pebbled edge as he nears,  
With our gaff-hook we check his retreat,  
And see, here he lies—a weltering prize  
At our feet !

OTTERS—(*continued.*)

It is in the winter season, when the pools have become frozen over, and are slightly covered with snow, that both the numbers and daring of our Border otters become pressed upon common attention. During the rest of the year, the imprints of their cautiously planted digits can only be detected by the practised and inquiring eye. On the occasion of a severe frost, however, the difficulty of ascertaining their numerical strength, and of coming to some conclusion as to their whereabouts and occupation, is greatly removed. Such opportunities are met with, in our uncertain climate, only now and then, but in so far as they

have happened to me personally, they have assisted to throw a good deal of light upon the subject under treatment. I am convinced, through what I have observed, that, in the neighbourhood of Kelso, Tweed and Teviot are, in the winter season, regularly and systematically traversed by otters; also, that in the course of their nocturnal forays, these animals exhibit great boldness, and will pursue their quarry in the shadow of human habitations, beneath the flare of gaslight, and within a stone's-cast of a country-town; moreover, that although, more especially under the circumstances which have favoured me in drawing these inferences, they will not scruple, now and then, to fasten on the shoulder-bit of a salmon; still, when doing so, they act with great prudence, taking care not to disturb the remainder in the pool, or cause, by recklessly betraying their presence to the breeding fish, the desertion of the spawning-grounds,—a lesson set by animal instinct which the pretenders to a higher source of guidance would do well to profit by.

Close to the Bridge at Kelso, and communicating with Springwood Park, the seat of Sir George Douglas, lies the entrance to a large covered sewer or tunnel, capable of being explored as far as the mason-work extends, by a grown-up person in a stooping posture. To this 'cundie,' as it is termed (a corruption probably of the word *conduit*) a few winters ago, a couple of otters were to be traced, both by the up and down tracks which, for several mornings in succession—so long, in fact, as the frozen state of the river permitted—came under the direct observation of the passers along the bridge.

In their night forays these animals appear to have acted in concert. Invariably, instead of creeping up the ice close to the banks, they struck out towards the centre of the river, showing their anxiety to reach the open current. It was through the second arch, not that superintending their retreat, the up-trail usually led. From the top of the bridge the eye could follow it,



until it came to where the river was free of ice, and ran with considerable rapidity in the shape of a narrow lade or race, on the other side of which the foot-prints of the animals re-appeared, and took their course towards a small island, or *Ana*, as it is locally called, situated above the junction of the Teviot with Tweed. Above the island, and accessory, no doubt, to its original formation, stands the cauld-dyke, built for the purpose of directing a sufficiency of water-power towards Kelso corn-mill. Below this barrier, on the south side of the river, where the slap lies, a great number of salmon were collected that winter, and had commenced spawning. These fish, many of which had been exhausted by fruitless efforts to reach higher ground, formed an object, no doubt, of attraction to the otters. On three successive mornings a salmon was discovered on an exposed part of the *Ana*, killed, and partly devoured by the pair in question. The severe frost having deprived them of all access to their usual food, they had evidently been pressed by hunger to commit this series of ravages.

A singular fact in connexion with this circumstance is, that although a large proportion of the fish assembled below the cauld-slap were at that time on the spawning-beds, and might have been approached and pounced upon with great ease, the salmon selected by the otters were all well-conditioned, such as, judging from their appearance, it would give some trouble to hunt down and secure. The paired breeders evidently were not thought palatable, and had been left unmolested; at any rate, they had not been scared away from the stream, for, during the days which followed these repasts, they were observed at work on the *redds* as unconcerned and apparently as numerous as ever, close to the spot where their less fortunate associates had been victimized. The fact that only one fish was discovered next morning, as the result of the previous night's foray, where there was opportunity for a wholesale massacre, goes to prove that the instincts of the

otter tribe do not lead them to indulge in wanton slaughter. The facts also of the breeding-salmon not having been dispersed, and of the animals' selection of the best-conditioned fish, help to show with what amount of cunning discretion they carry out their concerted plan of attack, and how fastidiously discriminating they are as to the object of it.

On the occasion of a large spate which took place in December 1860, and had reached its height about nine p.m., I happened to be on Kelso Bridge, the moon being at its full, when four otters, two of them half-grown, were dislodged from the drain above mentioned. Observation was attracted to them by the cries of distress, a sound betwixt a whine and a whistle, they gave vent to. All the four were plainly discernible in the moonlight, but the bullet-head of the dog-otter was the most conspicuous, and presented, under the circumstances, a supernatural appearance. Unable to stem the current, they were quickly carried down into the Maxwheel Pool, on the banks of which, below Pinnacle Hill, they probably effected a reunion; but their strange cry was heard above the roaring of the waters for the space of several minutes after the animals themselves were lost sight of.

In its character as an epicure, the otter has often been talked about, and the otter's bite brought under observation, as a part of the salmon, selected on account of its superior excellence. There is no doubt that invariably, in capturing a large fish, the otter abstracts its first morsel from the shoulder, immediately behind the head of its victim, and continues feeding on from that point until satisfied. But it is not, as affirmed, on account of any superiority or richness distinguishing this portion of the scaly prey that it battens upon it in particular. It does so simply because its instincts direct it to that quarter as the most vulnerable. The weasel tribe, to which the *lutra* belongs,—in fact, all vermin,—it may be noted, when they fasten on their live prey,

observe the same law, and are guided by it to a corresponding point of attack. The daintiness and fastidious discrimination of the otter in that respect savour of exaggeration; nor is the otter-bit in reality the tit-bit of a salmon.

In some measure the habits of the tamed otter will assist to illustrate those of the animal in its natural state; and by every one who has visited the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park, and taken an opportunity during feeding hours of watching the otters there confined, the way in which they pounce upon their food, the manner in which they bring it to bank and masticate it, will become at once apprehended. It will be observed that when the dead fish are emptied into the moat which forms part of the necessary fitting up of their cage (flounders appear to be the fare usually allotted to them; why not live eels now and then?) with what unhesitating rapidity each in its turn makes selection of the primest of the lot; how noiselessly it dives, and gracefully steers towards the spot where they have been deposited, and having effected its almost instantaneous seizure, how stealthily it climbs the inner parapet, the more timorous retiring with their booty into the kennel, and the bolder ones feeding unconcernedly and at ease in presence of the spectators, however numerous. There are no choice morsels in the carcasses of the bony flat fish it is dining off; yet it will be noticed that it is at the head and shoulders it invariably commences, and crunches on towards the tail, until it has devoured the whole fish.

During the winter I have referred to, the Teviot Bridge Pool, facing Kelso, was also occupied by a couple of otters; and higher up, judging from their tracks, a third set had established themselves, at a turn of the river known as the Maisondieu streams, above which, favouring their shelter, lies a small islet thickly set with willows. I am not aware, however, of any depredations having been committed on the Teviot salmon, during the pressure spoken of, by these animals. Means of sustenance were most

likely furnished to them in connexion with the drains and bank shelter of Springwood Park, which made it unnecessary to disturb the royal fish. Besides these opportunities of estimating the numerical strength of the otter tribe on this portion of our Border rivers, others have presented themselves still more confirmatory as evidence on this subject.

The late Duke of Atholl several years ago visited Kelso with his celebrated otter pack, and was very successful in obtaining sport. Two of the swims made are still talked over, being of unusual duration and interest. In one of them the otter was vented at Rutherford, six or seven miles above Kelso, and killed close to the town; in the other the dislodgement was effected near Kirkbank, on the Teviot, and the *finale*, of which I was an eye-witness, took place below Roxburgh Castle; the length of water gone over in the course of the hunt being about the same in either case. In 1864 a friend of mine brought over from Dumfriesshire a small scratch pack, with which, on two successive occasions, we tested the lower portion of Teviot, and the Kale, one of its feeders. On the former, and a smaller feeder, the Oxnam, we had, on the first occasion, two splashing runs, but failed to kill; the scent, owing to the lateness of our start, getting cold. Next day, on the Kale, we fell in, shortly after the dogs were put on, with a barren female, which tested pretty severely for a time the powers of the hounds, but was at length, after a noble resistance, mastered, and I have her stuffed in good style by the huntsman's brother, an adept at the business, within my domicile. We had another exciting hunt on the same stream immediately afterwards, but owing to the wooded nature of the banks, or the drains pervading them, failed in bringing it to the desirable crisis. The dogs and huntsman engaged, I may mention, are the same which stand depicted by Samuel Bough in a landscape taken by him near Canobie, and shown at Edinburgh in the Royal Academy's Exhibition of 1865.

I have authenticated to me, by the farmer who captured them, an instance of two otters which, not many years ago, took up their quarters in an old fox-cover among whins, and committed extensive depredations among the young lambs. Under the impression that the mischief was perpetrated by some loose dog, traps were set, and the culprits apprehended. The scene of action lay not far from the village of Gordon, in Berwickshire.

Otter-hunting, it may be remarked, is on the ascendency as a sport; and one of the reasons for it plainly is, that owing to the drainage system in vogue, otters, as well as rabbits, are more abundant than formerly.

## THE WARDERS OF THE WATERS.

### I.

YE warders of the waters !

Is the alder'd stream-side free ?

Hath the salmon sped

From his winter bed

Adown to the azure sea ?

Rideth afloat

The fisher's boat

Below the white-thorn tree ?

### II.

Go forth, ye anglers jovial !

The waters are open wide ;

No longer we ward

From vernal sward

The glittering salmon glide ;

Free at your will

The crystal rill

And rolling torrent-side.

## III.

Ho ! warders of the waters !  
Is the yellow trout at feed ?  
And the March-flies brown  
Are they sailing down  
Where current and zephyr lead ?  
See you abroad  
With busy rod  
Some gentle brother speed ?

## IV.

Go forth, ye anglers jovial !  
The ring of the trout we spy,  
And the south winds pour  
In a living shower  
The merry March-brown fly ;  
With busy wand  
The fisher band  
Among the dark pools ply !

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RUNS WITH SALMON.

ONE of the most exciting salmon-runs I ever witnessed took place in the neighbourhood of Kelso several years ago, near the close of the season. The fish was hooked about three P.M., at the neck of the Hempside Ford stream, by Mr. Meiklem. After making several pushes in the direction of Maxwheel, it set off at lightning speed towards Rosebank, the boat, managed by one of the Kersses, following with all haste. On reaching Rosebank, after parading up and down for more than half an hour, it

made at a strong pace for the head of the Grain; a rapid stream, situated nearly a mile below the point at which it was hooked. During its course hitherto it had only favoured us with one surface demonstration, exposing a breadth of tail which led to the belief that it was a fish of very uncommon dimensions. It was by this time quite dark, and any further evolutions which might have assisted us to pronounce upon its size, were undistinguishable. After making a show of pressing further down into the Grain stream, it suddenly wheeled round and made its way up again, the boat in full chase, to Rosebank, where it lay down for a short period, and gave opportunity to Sandy Smith, who acted as attendant to the fisherman, to procure a lantern from the toll-house.

On being again started, it continued, notwithstanding the strong pressure laid upon it by Mr. Meiklem, who was an expert fisher, and was armed on this occasion with a powerful salmon-rod, fitted next the hook with a triple-gut casting-line, to make play for a long time, not certainly in furious style, but in the form of strong pushes or runs, its snout evidently directed towards the bottom of the river, and its pectoral and ventral fins put into severe exercise. The winding up of the performance was not accomplished until eight P.M., when it is customary at Kelso to ring the bells of the Town-Hall, during the chiming of which, the gaff-hook, by aid of the lantern, was brought to bear upon the fish, which proved, after all, to be only a kipper-salmon of seventeen pounds, the secret of its strength and protracted exertions lying partly in its being provided with fins of uncommon size, adapted to thick, muscular sockets, and partly also in the circumstance of the night being dark, a condition which, it is averred, encourages the *salar* to show spirit and resistance.

## TO THE TWEED.

## I.

TWINED with my boyhood, wreathed on the dream  
Of early endearments—beautiful stream !  
The lisp of thy waters is music to me,  
Hours buried, are buried in thee !

## II.

Cheering and sinless, the mirth of thy springs !  
The light and the limpid—the fanciful things  
That mingle with thine the gleam of their play  
And are wafted in quiet away !

## III.

The voice of the city—the murmur of men,  
Regardless I hear them, and weary again  
For the lull of thy waters—the breath of the brae  
Brought down in a morning of May.

## IV.

Go ! hush'd o'er thy channels, the shadow'd, the dim ;  
Give wail for the stricken and worship to him  
That sang the old feats of the outlaw'd and free,—  
The legends that skirted on thee.

## V.

Broken the shell ; but its lingering tone  
Lives for the stream of his fathers—his own—  
And the pale wizard hand that hath glean'd out of eld  
Is again on thy bosom beheld.



## VI.

He hears not, but pilgrims that muse at his urn,  
At the wail of thy waters, all tearfully turn  
And mingle their mourning, their worship with thine,  
And gather the dews from his shrine.

## VII.

Tweed, winding and fair, where the heart is unbound,  
They wist not, they dream not, who linger around,  
How the sadden'd will smile and the suffering re-win  
From thee—the bliss wither'd within.

## VIII.

And I, when to breathe is a burden, and joy  
Forsakes me, and life is no longer the boy,  
On the labouring staff and the trem'rous knee,  
Shall wander, bright river, to thee !

## IX.

Thoughts will come back that were with me before,—  
Loves of my childhood left in the core  
That were hush'd but not buried—the treasured—the true,  
In memory waken anew.

## X.

And the hymn of the furze when the dew-pearls are shed,  
And the old sacred tones of thy musical bed  
Will close, as the last mortal moments depart,  
The golden gates of the heart ?

I HAVE been an actor in several lengthy and exciting salmon-runs, but in none that lasted above an hour and a half, not one-third of the time occupied by the struggle above detailed. Even with trout-tackle, and in contests with *dour* kelts of more than a stone weight, I have managed, without the aid of boat, gaff, or attendant, to bring my fish to grass in the course of less than half an hour. One of the most severe runs I ever recollect meeting with took place below the Thorn-tree Nick on Teviot, in 1856, the subject of it being a newly-run kipper-salmon, which turned the scales at thirty-two pounds. In landing him, I was indebted for assistance to a passer-by armed with a gaff-hook, and no doubt the duration of the run was greatly curtailed by this circumstance, the lower portion of my casting-line being made up of single gut. As it was, it took fully half an hour to master him. This was the largest salmon I ever caught. On the Floors Water, in November 1863, his Grace the Duke of Roxburghe having kindly invited me to enjoy a couple of days' fishing at a period when the river was well-stocked with large fish, I was successful in bringing to bank a splendidly-formed salmon of twenty-eight pounds, and, on the same day, another of twenty-two pounds. Having strong tackle and a trusty rod, I managed, with the assistance of Mr. Stevenson, his Grace's head fisherman, who handled the punt and landing-net, to compass the capture of the larger fish in less than a quarter of an hour; but the water being large, he was evidently out of his beat, and in consequence succumbed quicker than a salmon of that size, acquainted with the rocky underlie would have done, for there is no doubt that a thorough knowledge of its position, and every surrounding advantage, operates greatly in increasing the resistance, and calling into play the strategic resources of the fish. My second day's sport that year, on the same stretch of river, embraced five salmon, averaging eighteen pounds each.

Perhaps the most exciting encounter with a large, strong fish,

I ever engaged in, took place on the 21st of November 1864, on Teviot. The reel ordinarily used by me happened to be out of order, and I had substituted for it, without taking the precaution of examining the state of the handle, one which had been laid aside for an indefinite period. After setting up my rod and attaching the casting-line and fly, I commenced operations at the head of a well-known salmon-cast, the Ninewells, along the edge of which the wading, where it can be accomplished, is deep and unequal. I had not taken above three or four throws, when the nut or screw by which the handle of the reel was fastened on, becoming detached, the handle itself, by the force of my throw across the pool, was precipitated forwards and lodged among some large stones lying at a depth of nearly five feet, and at a corresponding distance from the spot which I occupied when taking the cast. It was some time before I could detect where it lay, and nearly an hour passed before I succeeded, by means of a large hook fastened to a stick, in recovering it. In the interim, three salmon-fishers, one after the other, laid line carefully over the pool. As I had taken several good fish from it, among them a twenty-two pound salmon, about a fortnight before, and knew that, although they all failed in bringing one to the surface, others were there, I was not discouraged by their want of success; quite otherwise, for, had a fish been hooked in my presence by one or other of them, I should probably have deserted the cast without giving it a trial. My only source of discouragement arose from the state of my reel, of which, although I had regained possession of the handle, I was unable, from want of the nut, to make active use of in the way of recovering line. I could still manage, however, to apply it in the manner of a watch-key, so as to accomplish a few revolutions at a time when it would invariably become detached and require replacement.

Under this drawback I recommenced fishing, using as a fly

the silver-doctor,—a late edition of the old well-known persuader. In the course of a few minutes I got hold of a good fish of eleven pounds, which, as may be imagined, I had some difficulty, in the winding-up scene of the play, to secure—a difficulty increased by the want of a convenient landing-place, and the interference of branches with the free use of my rod. I succeeded, however, in so tiring him out, that I could use the liberty of laying this implement down, and, descending the bank, pounce upon and toss my prize ashore. This done, and the *coup-de-grace* given, I again set to work with the same fly. Before long, the gleam of a large salmon in the act of seizing my hook discovered itself below the surface. Raising my rod, I felt that I had him fast, not by the mouth, however, but, as it turned out, by the tough skin which lies under the pectoral fin on one side.

After the pause of a second or two, off he set at a tremendous pace up the pool, exhausting, at the first rush, nearly my whole supply of line, about seventy yards, and concluding the heat with a vigorous somersault. He then, after another short pause, doubled in upon me in such a way as completely to slacken the reins, and compel me, in order to retain the master-hand, to use speed in an opposite direction; nor was it until a minute or two of high excitement had passed, that I became satisfied as to the fact that we were still in firm conjunction. The only resource left me was to make use, as I was best able, of the loose reel-handle, and recover line as quickly as possible. This, to a certain extent, I had succeeded in doing, when the fish again set off at steam-speed on a cruise down the river. To humour this movement, I was compelled not only to follow as fast as the nature of the bank permitted, but to pay out the larger portion of my recovered line, in doing which the handle of the reel was again thrown off and fell, lost to view among the rank grass. Taken up, as I was, with my fish and his vagaries, I had no time to search for it, but, marking the whereabouts of its fall,

hurried, or rather was dragged, forwards in rear of the chase, the respectful distance of seventy yards being kept up betwixt us. Still the salmon pressed on, but at a more leisurely rate, and, to keep pace with him in his way towards the foot of the pool, I had to pass my rod across the stems of several trees and bushes; also to hold it low, and in a direction nearly parallel to the water, in order to avoid coming into contact with the branch-work overhead. On reaching the shallows which divide the Nine-wells from the Turnpool stream, the fish once more doubled rapidly in upon me, skimming the surface, as he did so, and making the water fly on all sides of him. In order to keep a *taut* line, I had again, with all possible speed, to retrace my steps upwards, and managed at length, in spite of a good deal of manœuvring on his part, to arrive at the place where my reel-handle had been jerked off. Fortunately, I stumbled on the object of my search, and, notwithstanding that I could only derive slow and imperfect assistance from it in the way of winding-up, it was to its recovery alone that I owed, after a protracted and exhausting contest, my good fortune in securing what turned out to be a fine newly-run male salmon of twenty pounds' weight. The casting-line, I may mention, was of single gut, and the hook of size No. 8 in Philips' arrangement.

In running a salmon, two rules should always, if possible, be observed. To these, in the above instance, it was put out of my power to give effect, but the generality of occasions admit of their being followed to the letter. The one is, always keep up to your fish, and at right angles, or nearly so, with his head, no matter whether he presses down or up the stream. The other is, having studied the strength of your line, which every salmon-fisher should do, never employing faulty tackle, keep an equable, it need not be strong, pressure upon him. Let him know at once you have the mastery over him, even with a light line, by acting decisively; and when humouring him, never so far relax

the reins as to give him the impression that you are doubtful as to the issue of the struggle. Should you do so, depend upon it he will discover the weak point in your treatment, and, seeing that with him it is a matter of life and death, make the most of it. A steady, consistent pressure, regulated, as regards force, by the strength of rod and tackle, will do more to insure the speedy capture of a salmon than any other expedient.

### A PECK O' TROUBLES.

Gi'E me my gaud, my guid auld gaud,  
The wan' I lo'e sae rarely ;  
But faith, gudewife, its unco thraw'd,  
Ye haena used it fairly ?

#### II.

The bairns ! plague tak the thievin' things !  
They play the very deevil ;  
Wha'd think, they've hash'd my lav'rock-wings,  
An' ta'en my mennin-sweevil ?

#### III.

They've made sair wark amang the flees,  
There's neither huik nor hackle ;  
What's a' the guid o' brew or breeze  
An' no ae skein o' tackle ?

#### IV.

But hinnie, whar's my muckle reel ?  
Gi'e up yer cloots and needle—  
I wudna lose my honest wheel  
For a' the wives in Tweeddale.

## V.

No to the fore ! I micht hae guess'd  
Some ill or ither cam' o't ;  
It's gane the gate o' a' the rest,  
And nane to bear the blame o't.

## VI.

Aweel, aweel ! mishaps, we ken,  
Are coupled aye thegither ;  
Sae, gudewife, rax us yonner hen—  
She's dainty in the feather.

## VII.

A mawkin lug and tinsey braw,  
Ben in the kist ye'll find them,  
Auld reel and tippets, airs and a'—  
The airs be shure and mind them !

## VIII.

It gangs a wee agen the grain  
To thole sae mony troubles !  
And yet, gudewife, to ilka ane  
There's graith amang the stubbles.

## IX.

It's neither dole nor deep lament  
Will mend a bodie's grievance ;  
Sae e'en we'll haud ourselves content  
Wi' thae wee bits o' leavins ;

## X.

An' gin a sawmont soom the Tweed  
(The thing's no that unchancy),  
We'll gar the ilka tooth o't bleed,  
May fortune fa' the fancy!

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## PISCICULTURE.

## A VISIT TO MR. SHAW, DRUMLANRIG.

THE greater part of the month of May 1859 was spent in Dumfriesshire, on the banks of the Esk and the Nith, in company with my friend Wilson. One of the excursions undertaken by us was to Drumlanrig, with the view of meeting Mr. Shaw, the fruits of whose researches into the fresh-water habits of the salmon have been accepted by naturalists as a most valuable addition to science, and given an impetus to the pursuit of pisciculture, in its highest branch, both at home and abroad. A long-promised visit, which my friend and I were paying to Sheriff Trotter at Dumfries, gave us an opportunity, our kind entertainer during the forenoon being occupied with his judicial duties, of hurrying up Nithsdale by an early train to the station near Thornhill, and thence, by gig, proceeding to Mr. Shaw's cottage, which stands overlooking the valley a short way beyond the ducal castle, and commanding a stretch of landscape to which, with all appropriateness, the term 'magnificent' may be applied.

Drumlanrig, of the several princely residences in Scotland possessed by his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, is certainly the most princely. It greatly surpasses in command of situation, and extent of pleasure-grounds, Dalkeith Palace, Bowhill, and



Langholm Lodge. On arriving at our destination, we found Mr. Shaw deeply engaged, within the precincts of his lovely abode, in the mysteries of gardening. Many years had elapsed since my friend Wilson, then in company with his father, had formed his acquaintance, and the mutual recognition which took place was in consequence not so instantaneous as to preclude a preliminary query or two, capped by a reflective ejaculation on the changes which tell on men and things. A hearty welcome followed this preface to my introduction, and the lapse of a few moments beheld us seated in a comfortable parlour, plied with the best of cheer, and in the heat of a discussion, on a subject not yet fully made clear, namely, the breeding of salmon and sea-trout. Mr. Shaw's views, expressed in a paper published among the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, have been generally accepted by naturalists. On most points I give my assent to them ; but there has always rested a difficulty in my mind in regard to one particular, the existence of which led me some years ago to attack his theory with indiscreet asperity. Since that time, I have been induced through observation to surrender, in part, my former belief, and to regret that I should so inconsiderately have set up a raw and untutored opinion against the facts ascertained and registered, of which Mr. Shaw was the promulgator.

Luncheon over, we descended to the salmon-trap, an ingenious contrivance devised by Mr. Shaw, on the Nith, for the twofold purpose of taking and of keeping alive and uninjured, until required for table, the ascending fish, which at the season of our visit consisted principally of sea-trout. This device (it has probably, under the New Solway Act provisions, been done away with) occupied a part of the river narrowed in by rocks and overhung picturesquely with trees. The force or pressure of water, naturally strong, was enhanced by artificial means, and made subservient to the purposes of the erection. The cage or

prison into which the fish became thrown by the directive force of the current was a roomy one, covering, in the form of a parallelogram, a superficial area, which, so far I can remember, was not much short of a hundred square yards. It was built very compactly of stone, clinched and riveted from the foundation upwards. A grating, constructed of strong iron bars, protected it from depredators, access to the interior being given by means of a trap-door, which was kept under lock and key. From this entrance a short ladder conducted to a ledge or parapet, about two feet in width, which surrounded, and was nearly on a level with the aqueous contents of the cage when plenished. Taking the superficial area of this tank or conservatory to be a hundred yards, and the usual depth three feet, these contents amount to no less than 2700 cubic feet of water, a considerable bulk when so estimated, but one which, in order to facilitate the capture of the fish, it was necessary to get rid of, or at anyrate greatly reduce. This was accomplished by a simple but ingenious piece of machinery, set agoing by the pressure of the current at the upper end of the trap, an oar-blade, or piece of planking similarly shaped, being employed as the primary lever-power, the results of its action being, at one and the same time, to shut off the supplies by the gradual lowering of a sluice-gate at the feeding point, and effect a displacement of the watery contents of the reservoir without opening up a means of *exceunt* to the finny ones. The whole process did not occupy above ten or twelve minutes. On the occasion of our visit, the inmates of the cage consisted of five or six sea-trout, varying in weight from one-and-a-half pound to three pounds, all of them fresh-run, and in good condition. Of these Mr. Shaw selected three, which were forthwith secured by the assistance of a hand-net, despatched by the nabby or doctor, and sent off to their various destinations; a prime one to his own cottage, to be greeted and further commented on by us at the dinner-table, along with other delicacies, in the course of the afternoon.

A stroll down the river succeeded our visit to the salmon-trap. The day was bright, and not adapted for fly-fishing; the Nith also was clear and low, presenting, in these respects, some temptation to an adept with the worm or creeper. On looking into its pools and streams, however, which the nature of the superintending banks allowed one to do with effect, I was greatly disappointed in discovering that they contained, in proportion to their extent, and considering the advantage given them of being strictly preserved, such a poor supply of river-trout—not a tithe, in fact, of what I had been led to expect. The size also of such specimens as met the eye was very inferior. It did not exceed that which characterizes the trout of a third-rate tributary of Tweed. The paucity in question was attributed by Mr. Shaw to the limited extent of the spawning-grounds; the feeders of the Nith, which at one time furnished a tolerable supply of breeding accommodation, being now, for the most part, rendered inaccessible by erections for the purpose of hoarding up water-power. A better explanation, I think, may be given, by taking into account the absence of permanent shelter, and the want also of a regular and sufficiently ample supply of food. A mere deficiency in point of numbers, resulting from the narrowing up of the breeding-grounds, would, were food and shelter only ordinarily abundant, become atoned for by a superiority in respect of size and condition, a superiority which the Nith trout at Drumlanrig certainly did not discover. I could easily adduce a score of instances to prove, in regard to river and loch trout, of what essential value the provisions above named are, in the way of maintaining the breed; also showing that an immense stock may be raised over a very limited extent of breeding-ground, provided that breeding-ground be of the right sort. The inquisition held on the Nith trout from the banks was followed up, I may mention, by a further trial with the rod and line, of which, after nearly an hour's perseverance, the result was the capture of two herring-sized

trout, one of which betrayed its whereabouts previous to its being hooked, by rising at a natural fly.

Before leaving Drumlanrig, our enjoyment after dinner of a reeking tumbler was enhanced by the account our entertainer gave us of his progress, so far, towards the introduction of the grayling to Dumfriesshire. As regards the first step, the great secret of success in connexion with the experiment lies in the keeping up of the supply of pure air in the transporting medium. It is now indeed well known how necessary, in a greater or less degree, to the existence of fishes, especially the *Salmonidæ*, is the oxygenic constituent, and how quickly, through the action of their respiratory organs, the element they live in is liable to become deprived of it. In the transportation of the funny tribe in their live state, the employment of the air-pump as an adjunct to the vessel containing the specimens under way may henceforth be considered as indispensable. The success met with by Mr. Shaw in the safe conveyance of the grayling, was capped, as is pretty well known to those who take an interest in such matters, by the more important one of obtaining a hatch or breed. The paired fish, on being brought to Drumlanrig, were committed to a carefully-selected and well-secured spot in a rivulet passing through the policy-grounds, where they shortly afterwards commenced breeding operations, and in due time the infant broods discovered themselves. Several specimens, bottled in spirits of wine, were set before us, of the hatch referred to. They were about an inch and a half or nearly two inches in length, and, so far as I could judge, not more than six weeks old.

That the grayling will thrive, and eventually become plentiful in the Nith, I am by no means sanguine. The adaptation of that river to its requirements certainly does not discover itself to the casual visitor. Mr. Shaw, however, looked forward to success with strong confidence, an element which, in an experiment of this sort, is absolutely essential. If pisciculture, in fact, is to

become established among the arts and sciences, it can only attain that dignity by the aid of sanguine experimentalists like Mr. Shaw. Even in the failures of such men there is a measure of success. They pave the way to the detection of what caused them, and lead in most instances to the application of corrective measures. The triumphs of agriculture have been attained, and are still in progress, owing to the zeal and devotedness paid to its study as a science. It is no longer an occupation for mere serfs—the tilling of the soil! No longer is it left to nature to give us harvests of plenty. As well as the hand, the head and the heart—good heads and brave hearts—are at work in this branch of industry. Art joins with nature in the field, aids, regulates, nay, even dictates to it, and as a result—as the result of this grand putting forth of energies, this active enthusiasm—we have corn and fodder in tenfold abundance, thicker fleeces and roomier fleshpots; the principle which nourished the tare and thistle transferred to the useful plants, and made to contribute to the support of human life and the increase of national wealth. Such are the triumphs which have crowned, and are still crowning, the art of agriculture.

Pisciculture, as earnestly pursued and devotedly engaged in, will no doubt lead to results of equal importance. The requirements of a growing population, in the matter of diet, will be assisted by it, and the transactions of commerce become more numerous. Rivers, lakes, and estuaries, hitherto barren and unprofitable, will be converted into storeholds, and made capable, in the day of dearth and famine (a day which, as regards the produce of our stalls and corn-fields, may occur at any time) of assuaging, if not of warding off, one of the most terrible forms of calamity.

## THE TRYSTING-TREE.

## I.

SING, sweet thrushes, forth and sing !  
Meet the morn upon the lea ;  
Are the emeralds of spring  
On the angler's trysting-tree ?  
Tell, sweet thrushes, tell to me,  
Are there buds on our willow-tree ?  
Buds and birds on the trysting-tree ?

## II.

Sing, sweet thrushes, forth and sing !  
Have you met the honey-bee  
Circling upon rapid wing  
Round the angler's trysting-tree ?  
Up, sweet thrushes, up and see,  
Are there bees at our willow-tree ?  
Birds and bees at our trysting-tree ?

## III.

Sing, sweet thrushes, forth and sing !  
Are the fountains gushing free ?  
Is the south wind wandering  
Through the angler's trysting-tree ?  
Up, sweet thrushes, tell to me  
How stirs the wind through our willow-tree ?  
How bend the boughs of the trysting-tree ?

## IV.

Sing, sweet thrushes, up and sing !  
Wile us with a merry glee,

To the flowery haunts of spring—  
To the angler's trysting-tree !  
Tell, sweet thrushes, tell to me,  
Are there flowers 'neath our willow-tree ?  
Spring and flowers at the trysting-tree ?

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### THE GRAYLING.

SINCE my visit to Drumlanrig, and the introduction of the grayling into the Nith, a question has arisen regarding the desirability of adding this fish to our river-stock in Scotland. It has been affirmed that, since its introduction to the Clyde, the trout of that river have shown a considerable decrease in point of numbers,—a circumstance traced, I have been told, to the ravages committed among them during the spawning season by the grayling, which, in October and November, when the *fario* usually deposits its *ova*, is in prime condition and high-feeding humour.

The fact of trouting-rivers once in high repute being greatly injured by the introduction of the grayling into their waters, has been confirmed to me, *viva voce*, by the proprietor, to a large extent, of one of the finest streams in Yorkshire. It stands to reason anyway, that, seeing this fish and the common freshwater trout breed at nearly opposite seasons of the year, they do not in other respects harmonize ; moreover, that encouragement given to the grayling in our Scottish rivers amounts to direct encouragement to poaching, and serves as an excuse for anglers to be out with rod and line during the winter months. On rivers frequented by salmon and sea-trout, like Tweed and Teviot, on the latter of which attempts are being made to cultivate the grayling, which, if successful, will eventually extend to its reci-

pient all the evil consequences,—on such rivers I would certainly set face against so hazardous an experiment being carried out, and would have no more scruples in excising a stray *Thymallus vulgaris* than I would have in slaying Master Pike when in the act of running ‘a-muck’ among the smolts. The superlative excellence of the Teviot fresh-water trout, and the propriety of securing for the migratory species in close-time undisturbed possession of the fords, furnish reasons sufficient for an interdict against the introduction of grayling into its waters, and I trust will prove deterrent when fully considered in those quarters where the misjudged experiments are being carried on.

## TWEED FOR EVER!

### I.

LET ithers anglers choose their ain,  
An’ ithers waters tak’ the lead,  
O’ Hielan’ streams we covet nane,  
But gi’e to us the bonnie Tweed !  
An’ gi’e to us the cheerfu’ burn  
That steals into its valley fair—  
The streamlets that at ilka turn  
Sae saftly meet an’ mingle there.

### II.

The lanesome Tala and the Lyne,  
An’ Manor wi’ its mountain-rills,  
An’ Etterick whose waters twine  
Wi’ Yarrow frae the Forest hills ;  
An’ Gala too, and Teviot bright,  
An’ mony a stream o’ playfu’ speed ;  
Their kindred valleys a’ unite  
Amang the braes o’ bonnie Tweed.



## III.

There's no a hole aboon the Crook,  
Nor stane nor gurly swirl aneath,  
Nor drumlie rill, nor faery brook  
That daunders through the flow'ry heath,  
But ye may fin' a kittle troot,  
A' gleamin' ower wi' starn and bead ;  
An' mony a sawmont sooms aboot  
Below the bields o' bonnie Tweed.

## IV.

Frae Holylee to Clovenford,  
A chancier bit ye canna ha'e ;  
Sae gin ye tak' an angler's word,  
Ye'll through the whuns an' ower the brae,  
An' work awa wi' cunnin' hand  
Yer birzy heckles, black and reid ;  
The saft sough o' a slender wand  
Is meetest music for the Tweed !

O the Tweed ! the bonnie Tweed !  
O' rivers it's the best ;  
Angle here, or angle there,  
Troots are sooming everywhere,  
Angle east or west.

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## LOCHMABEN—FIRST VISIT.

My friend W. and I having accepted a kind invitation to spend a day or two with the late Mr. Macdonald of Rammer-scales, and, under his guidance, to visit the Lochmaben lochs,

availed ourselves of it on the 23d of May 1859, proceeding by way of Lockerbie from the heart of Eskdale to our place of destination. We were favoured during our excursion with fine sunny weather, and arrived at Rammerscales (a barbarous corruption of Randolph de Scaldis, equerry of Robert the Bruce, to whom the property had formerly been granted) early in the morning, in time to partake of breakfast with the family. Mr. Macdonald, who was well known and appreciated as a classical scholar and Orientalist, performed, until the day of his demise, in December 1862, the duties of secretary to a club composed chiefly of the gentlemen in the district, the meetings of which are held once in the twelvemonth on the banks of the Castle Loch. Its designation is the Vendace Club. Sir W. Jardine, Bart., of Applegarth, has been for many years its president, and to him it probably owes its institution. The object of its meetings may be considered as social; and, viewed in that light, along with the gratification derivable from witnessing the capture of that rare and delicate fish, peculiar to Loch Maben, the vendace, or *Coregonus Willughbii*, unites the further pleasure of testing its merits as a subject for gastronomic indulgence, dainty as the whitebait of the Thames, the burbot of the Trent, or the char of Windermere.

The capture of the vendace in the Castle Loch (there are five expanses of water bearing the designation Loch in the Lochmaben range, as well as several ponds or water-holes; but the Castle or Palace Loch is the principal, covering upwards of 200 acres, Scottish measure, of ground), the capture of this fish is conducted entirely by the net and coble—an unsportsmanlike way confessedly of going to work, but one which there is no help for, as the vendace cannot be taken by any other means,—feeding, as it has been declared to do by Dr. Knox, on ‘very minute entomostracous animals, not exceeding seven-twelfths of a line in size.’ The impossibility, however, of taking the vendace

with rod and line is a matter of no great regret, as the dimensions of the fish are very insignificant, and it possesses no game qualities. Its ordinary length is from seven to eight inches. In appearance it bears some resemblance to a sprat or a sardine, but the scales and colouring are a trifle more delicate.

Our visit to Lochmaben had been arranged a fortnight before it took place; and Mr. Macdonald, in the interim, had kindly, as promised, taken an opportunity to acquaint the then tenant of the shootings and fishings, Dr. Scott, of our wish to investigate the contents of the Castle Loch, close to which, in a beautiful little rustic dwelling, yeleft Vendace Cottage, he resided. The intimation of our wish, conveyed by Mr. Macdonald, had been responded to by the assurance that every endeavour would be made to further the object of our visit, and that notice would be duly given to the fisherman and his assistant to have the net and coble in readiness at any hour we chose to fix on. On our arrival we found all prepared, and our entertainer on the lookout, agreeably to promise, so that, after devoting a few minutes to the inspection of his eel-traps, and a small canal or reservoir filled with roach, which occupied a corner of the garden, the roach being collected and kept up as a provision wherewith to bait lines for pike, etc., we made our way down to the boat-house.

I had taken, I may mention, a trouting-rod with me, under the impression that I might have an opportunity of bringing it to bear against one or other of the various kinds of fish, eleven in number, inhabiting the Castle Loch; but this idea received a check the moment I came to the water's edge. The element, which I had expected to find, not crystalline certainly, like the contents of some of our Highland lakes, but moderately pure and transparent, was thick, if not unctuous—full of floating particles, which, when submitted, I was told, to microscopic test, teemed with insect life in great variety.

In Yetholm and Dunse Castle Lochs, I may add also the Drummond Castle Ponds, and those at Raith in Fifeshire, Beal in East Lothian, and Gartmorn near Alloa, I have noticed somewhat similar conditions of water, but never at the corresponding period of the year; *only* in *their* case during autumn, and after a disturbance by rain and wind of the rank and decaying lacustrine vegetation, run to a head since the spread, particularly, of the water-weed *Anacharis alsinastrium*, in one or more of the localities above mentioned.

There is more, however, than the mere decay of vegetable matter, in its primary stage, to be accounted for here in the Lochmaben district. The aqueous contents of the Castle Loch owe their peculiarity, no doubt, to the *alveus* itself, and the conjunction of mineral agencies with those derived year after year from the decay of plants. The feeding properties of the water account plainly enough for the finny wealth of the lake, which is both varied and abundant. They also account for a certain degree of fastidiousness as regards their food, which renders it difficult, by means of the angler's resources, to command a successful day's sport among those of its denizens whose habits are held predatory. The very pike and eels of Lochmaben, I am told, are saucy fish, more capricious in their humours than the pike and eels of other localities. On the bream, which is here very numerous, they disdain to feed. As a dead-bait on the set-line it possesses no charm. A fresh roach so presented they will bolt occasionally; a live one to the pike is more attractive. He gives preference, however, to the vendace, in proof of which, when taken with the net, he is frequently found gorged with this dainty, showing that he possesses the tact to discriminate betwixt the objects of his prey, and that feeding with him is not always a mere question of gratifying hunger. The vendace being but a rare fish, in comparison with the roach and bream, in the Castle Loch, renders his acquisition of it, in any number,

the more extraordinary, and demonstrative of the fact that our friend *lucius* must especially esteem this delicate little *morceau*, and hunt it down, when his appetite and tastes are so inclined, with great pertinacity. The descent of the pike of Till into Tweed in pursuit of the smolts, which I have made mention of in the course of these chapters, affords another instance of the preferences of our fresh-water shark, and his power of discrimination, an instinct so frequently questioned by anglers.

But I return to our investigation of the lake with net and coble, under the conduct of Dr. Scott and his assistants. The first haul was an unpromising one, consisting of a few roach and small bream, a perch, and some sticklebacks. It was taken, however, on beaten ground, so to call it, in front of the cottage. The next capture (a circuit, as far as it could be accomplished, of the loch, in successive sweeps of the net, forming the programme usually followed on such occasions) discovered a decided improvement in point of numbers. This improvement continued as we advanced, and reached its height at a haul taken near the mouth of the principal feeder. The contents of the net, in this instance, amounted, taking a rough guess, to nearly a thousand fish, nineteen-twentieths of which were bream (*Abramis brama*), the remaining twentieth consisting principally of roach. There were also four or five pike, the largest not exceeding five pounds, and about half a score of small perch. Among the bream were some fair-sized specimens, running from half a pound up to two pounds, but the generality of them were not more than three ounces in weight. Subsequent hauls, taken on the north side of the loch, discovered still larger specimens of this insipid fish. Of these we retained the pick, setting the others at liberty.

As to the vendace, to procure which was our main object, we failed to obtain a single specimen. At no time, it appears, is it abundant, at least it has not been so of late years. On the occasion of the Vendace Club meetings, held two or three

months later, when a net of greater compass is employed, the takes of this delicious little fish rarely do more than satisfy the immediate requirements of the Club, in the way of affording each of its members his respective *bonne bouche*. It has been ascertained that the habits of the vendace confine it, during the greater portion of the year, to the central ranges of the loch, where the depth of water is greatest, and where it is most secure from the attacks of pike. It is only late in summer that it approaches the margins, and can be taken by means of net and coble. Not to have obtained even a solitary specimen of this fish was, I allow, a great disappointment, and quite upset my preconceptions of its comparative abundance. With the grand facility presented by a small-meshed long-net, equal nearly in dimensions to what is used on Tweed in the tideway, I certainly looked forward to more satisfactory results than those actually obtained from our investigation of Lochmaben. I expected a greater variety of fish, and I expected also to come across a magnate or two in the shape of a pike, perch, or trout. The last-mentioned fish are, I am told, scarce. One of four pounds or thereabouts had been taken by Dr. Scott with the spoon-bait during the previous season, but its capture under these circumstances was quite an event in the history of the loch, and the experience to boot of its captor.

Among the fishes enumerated as belonging to the Castle Loch, and peculiar to it, is one termed the greenbone. This designation, however, I have ascertained to be local, applied, in fact, to what is neither less nor more than the roach in its younger stage. It is quite out of place when made use of in order to characterize a species of fish belonging to the same genus (*Cyprinidæ*), of which Lochmaben is the only known *habitat*.

The month of May being the spawning season of the bream, I was made alive to this feature in its natural history, by being introduced by Dr. Scott to the exact spot in the lake where the

spawning process is carried on. A thick post, erected on a shoal which occurs not far from the centre of the Castle Loch, marks the position of this accustomed gathering-place. Here, within the compass of a circle not twenty yards in diameter, the fish draw together in immense numbers. Rowing close up to it, we had no difficulty, notwithstanding the semi-opaque state of the water, in distinguishing them; that portion at least of the shoal which hung on the surface.

Dr. Scott, our entertainer, was, as I mentioned, the tenant of the fishings of the Castle Loch, and a portion of the shootings in its neighbourhood, belonging, at the time of my visit, to the late Lord Murray, one of the Senators of the College of Justice. Although taken as subjects of sport, the fishings cannot with propriety be held as such. The rod, no doubt, may be employed, and a large-sized pannier implemented occasionally through means of it; but the amusement of catching insipid bream and roach in this way is quite as insipid as the fish themselves. In the setting and drawing of lines for pike and eels there is a certain amount of satisfaction, and it was chiefly by this mode of fishing that Dr. Scott made use of his right as the lessee of the loch. He also, as he informed us, took advantage of the periodical emigrations of the last-mentioned fish, the outlet of the Castle Loch running close to Vendace Cottage, to capture them by means of traps.

I may mention that, during my trip to Lochmaben, on the conclusion of the netting operations, a simple and speedy method of flaying a pike, preparatory to its being cooked, was communicated to us by our host, who gave the credit of it, as an ingenious process, to the late Sir Humphry Davy, with whom, in his younger days, he had formed an acquaintance during a Continental fishing-tour. We had several subjects to choose from, the best of them a well-fed *lucius*, of about five pounds in weight. A flat board being obtained (of course, a kitchen-table or dresser

would have answered the purpose better), the fish was placed upon it at full length on its side, and with a common dinner-knife, to which a rough saw-edge had been given, the keeper, or fisherman, who acted as operator, after making an incision immediately above the tail, proceeded to insinuate the levelled edge of his instrument below the skin, and by a dexterous movement of the hand, detached, in three or four strokes, the whole of the scaly coating lying betwixt the gills and caudal fins, strip after strip. The fish was then turned over, and similarly operated on on the other side. In fact, in the course of a few seconds, it was entirely dispossessed of its slimy armour, and after being crimped was despatched to the kitchen for further manipulation, prior to its appearance at the dinner-table.

## THE GREETING OF THE SPRING.

### I.

Bless with me the spring-tide bland,  
All ye anglers of the valley !  
Wave aloof the slender wand,  
And around the oak-tree rally.

### II.

Bless the birds that all along  
Send us such a merry greeting ;  
To their measures of kind song  
Joyously our hearts are beating.

### III.

Fleeted now the winter snow  
From the foreheads of the mountains ;  
And the ransom'd waters flow  
Freely from their teeming fountains.



## IV.

From its hiding in the brake,  
Peeps the primrose—spring's sweet vassal ;  
And the wild bees music make  
Round the willows' golden tassel.

## V.

Hark ! the concert of delight  
Holding in the hazel cover,  
And the piping on the height  
Of the restless-footed plover !

## VI.

How the lambs in sunny sport  
Mock their mother's piteous bleating !  
Every voice in Nature's court  
Is loud and emulous with greeting.

## VII.

Fresh and free the breezes blow,  
And the amber stream runs gaily ;  
Forth and warble as you go,  
All ye anglers of the valley !

## LOCHMABEN—SECOND VISIT.

By the kind invitation of my friend the late Mr. Macdonald of Rammerscales, I was present at the annual meeting of the Vendace Club, at the Castle Loch of Lochmaben, on the 5th of August 1862, and had the gratification of witnessing what was regarded by Sir William Jardine of Applegarth, the president of the Club, and other members, as a very satisfactory day's fishing.

The result, so far as the capture of the vendace was concerned, made up amply for my disappointment on the occasion of my first visit to this celebrated lake. The long-net was laid on early in the forenoon, close to the ancient little burgh which bears the name of the parish or district. At the start, the results certainly were not promising, the first four or five hauls embracing merely a few bream and roach of insignificant size. On approaching the Castle the takes were heavier, and included some fair specimens of pike, the largest, however, not exceeding in weight seven pounds, several perch, and a rudd or red-eye, which Sir William remarked was a rare fish in the Castle Loch, and in our Scottish waters generally, although common to many of the slow-running rivers in the south of England. An eel, also, of attractive beauty, as regarded colour and shape, was taken, and a fine trout of two or three pounds' weight made its escape when on the point of being landed. It was not, however, until more than half the circuit of the loch had been completed, and the net brought to bear upon that portion of it which is overlooked by the Castle ruins, that specimens of the vendace dawned in upon us, first by twos and threes, and afterwards, about luncheon-time, and during a pelt of rain, in considerable numbers, the whole proceeds amounting to four or five dozens. In the opinion of Sir William, they were the largest and finest specimens of the *Coregonus Willughbii* which had been taken for a number of years, several of them exceeding eight inches in length. One of their characteristics, that of bearing on the top of the head the well-defined shape of a heart, glazed over, as it were, with a thin transparent substance, exposing to view the brain of the fish, was particularly noticeable in the newly-caught specimens. A small collection of the different fishes belonging to the Castle Loch was made on this occasion by Professor Archer, who was present at the meeting. Prepared under his careful superintendence, this souvenir now occupies a case

among the curiosities of the Edinburgh Industrial Museum, of which he is the zealous and highly intelligent principal.

As the guest of Mr. Macdonald, I was present at the Club dinner, which was numerously attended by gentlemen belonging to the district, Sir William Jardine occupying the chair. Among the viands the vendace was included, along with pike and eel. It was cooked after the smelt fashion, with the entrails left intact, and somewhat resembled that fish in flavour.

The repast was crowned by a remarkably fine haunch of Annandale venison, from the deer-parks of Mr. Hope Johnstone, who in this shape annually adds his contribution to the good fare of the Lochmaben feast. Enlivening but virtuous libations of Glasgow punch, and the national beverage, agreeably sweetened and diluted, wound up the meeting.

## THE HERON-LAKE.

### I.

THE breeze is on the Heron-lake,  
The May-sun shineth clear ;  
Away we bound through the ferny brake,  
With our wands and angling gear.

### II.

The birch-wreath o'er the water edge  
Scatters sweet flies about ;  
And round his haunt of whisp'ring sedge,  
Bells up the yellow trout.

### III.

Take heed ! take heed ! his eye is bright  
As falcon's in the sky ;  
But artful feather hove aright,  
Will hood a keener eye.

## IV.

Beware, beware the water-weed,  
And the birch that weeps behind,  
And gently let the true line speed  
Before thee on the wind.

## V.

Oh ! gently let the good line flow,  
And gently wile it home :  
There's many a gallant fin I trow  
Under the ribbèd foam.

## VI.

A merry fish on a stallion-hair,  
'Tis a pleasant thing to lead  
On May-days, when the cowslip fair  
Is yellowing on the mead.

## VII.

When the breeze starts up, and the sun peeps out,  
And grey flies two or three  
Hold merry frolic round about,  
Under the green-wood tree.

## VIII.

Oh ! then the heart bounds pleasantly,  
And its thoughts are pleasant things,  
Gushing in joyous purity,  
Like mirthful water-springs.

THE TRANSPLANTATION OF FRESH-WATER  
FISHES.

IN connexion with pisciculture and the acclimatization of fishes, how best to transmit from place to place, in a live and healthy condition, the finny inhabitants of the lake and river, becomes a question of no little importance. Much practical difficulty, there can be no doubt, was formerly experienced in the stocking of rivers and fish-ponds, arising from the distance which the stock in many instances had to be carried. This difficulty, since the spread of railway communication, has been greatly lessened; but even the facilities which at present exist for the promulgation, through transference, of our fresh-water fishes, do not abstract from the care and nicety with which the process in question requires in every case to be carried on. It is still a process which, if committed to ignorant or slovenly hands, runs a strong chance of failure, and, as it admits of being conducted on a basis of well-ascertained facts, a notice of these may be found useful.

The fresh-water fishes belonging to our lakes and rivers, which it is most expedient to cultivate and introduce to a larger area, are, I premise, disproportionally endowed with the life-power, so to call it, which qualifies them for being readily shifted from place to place and planted out as stock. In some of them—the various species of the *Salmonidæ* for instance,—this capacity is extremely limited, and the subjects of transmission accordingly require, in the course of it, the most careful and judicious treatment; in others, again, it discovers itself to a much fuller extent, and there is less occasion for ceremony. Without descending to the *Murænidæ*, examples of fishes, so constituted, may be adduced from the carp family; also from the *Percidæ* and *Esocidæ*, all of which deserve notice. The life of the carp, we have been credi-

bly informed, may be sustained for several weeks, apart from any direct communication with its native element, a mere sprinkling thereof being from time to time administered. Resting on wet moss, and suspended in net-work in a cool cellar, this fish (*Cyprinus carpio*), it appears, is not only capable of retaining life, and of making use, for that purpose, of its respiratory organs, but will also accept of nourishment in the shape of bread soaked in sweet milk, under such circumstances.

The tench, also, a fish belonging to the same family, is independent of those delicate attentions which are required by trout or salmon during the process of transplantation. Loosely placed among wet, sedgy grass, in a basket made of coarse wickerware, through the interstices of which the air circulates freely, specimens of it may be conveyed by a train moving at the rate of twenty or twenty-five miles in the hour, from London to Inverness, or any corresponding distance, without injury to their vital functions,—the precaution being observed every now and then to sprinkle fresh water over them and keep the package cool.

In the case of the minnow (*Leuciscus phoxinus*), another of the same family, which is made use of to such an extent as a spinning-lure by the angler, its capability of retaining life when in confinement is well known. Within the area of a common soda-water bottle, I have frequently kept twenty and upwards of moderate-sized minnows for a period varying from three to nine hours, changing the water, according to the prevailing temperature of the day, about once in the hour, on the average.

When salmon-fishing in frosty weather, or when the river is low, I sometimes resort to the minnow as a more sure persuader than the artificial fly; and usually, on such occasions, provide myself with a dozen large-sized specimens, more or less, which, although taken with the hook, I have known to exist for the space of eight hours, without showing any symptoms of exhaus-

tion, in a glass vessel of the description mentioned, no fresh supply of water being administered to them during that period. Care should be taken, when minnows for convenience are cooped up in this fashion, not to introduce into the bottle more water than shall occupy two-thirds of its area. By filling it completely, and then closely corking it up, you deprive your prisoners altogether of the sustaining principle, *air*, which is as necessary for piscine as for human existence. The effect of its seasonable introduction may be shown on an occasion when the minnows, by rising to the surface of the water, and no longer probing with their noses towards the bottom, exhibit signs of languor and distress. In such an emergency you may, without changing the water, restore them, in a certain measure, to their wonted liveliness, simply by extracting the cork and shaking the contents of the bottle, so as to combine with them a fresh supply of the atmospheric element.

Another method adopted by me in carrying minnows, is the one above recommended in the transportation of the tench. It consists simply in the committing of these little fishes to a loose wrapping of grass or moss, well-wetted and placed in a corner of the fishing-basket. Through means of this expedient, which has been occasionally forced upon me in absence of a bottle or other vessel, I have been enabled to preserve the life-power, and consequent freshness, of my spinning-baits, throughout the day. Upon the inconvenience which may arise from so primitive a mode of managing my live-baits, I need not enlarge. It is worth while, however, for the learner in piscatorial lore to know all this, as the knowledge one day or other may prove serviceable to him. The same treatment, I may add, will be found successful when extended to loaches and sticklebacks.

With all its adaptation for ready transference, it is somewhat singular that the minnow has not as yet been introduced into the northern counties of Scotland; Ross-shire, Caithness, and

Sutherland. It is rarely met with also in Inverness-shire; and yet it would be very desirable to have it acclimatized, for the purposes both of feeding trout and accommodating the angler, throughout those well-watered districts. In the extreme North, on the banks of the Thurso and the Naver, the variations of temperature are not, as is generally supposed, such as would affect this fish in the least; indeed, some years ago, on talking with Mr. Horsburgh, at that time his Grace the Duke of Sutherland's factor, at Tongue House, on the practicability of introducing perch into some of the superfluous lakes belonging to the Reay territory, he mentioned to me, as a notable fact, that the temperature in that quarter is usually, during winter, four degrees higher than it is in the vicinity of Edinburgh.

In the minnow, I think, a fair subject offers itself for introductory experiment, in the way of transmitting alive some of our fresh-water British fishes to New Zealand, or other of our colonies, adapted for its reception. From what I know of its capability of sustaining life in a confined state, I consider it practicable, using very simple means, to keep in healthy condition a stock of minnows, say three or four dozens, during a three months' voyage, on an allowance of four gallons of water *per diem*, which water, after they have had the full benefit of it, might be used with perfect safety for other purposes. I have known a stock of the above amount kept in a sleeping-apartment for more than a twelvemonth, and that in a wash-hand-basin, into which rain water from a cistern was admitted, by the drop, at the rate of thirty or forty drops per minute, and drawn away in the same proportion, through a small orifice leading into a waste pipe at the bottom of the basin, which, I may add, was provided with a wire covering, in order to prevent the minnows from leaping over its edges. On a similar plan, the transportation of this little fish might, I think, be conducted, precautions being taken in the construction of the receiving jar or basin, to prevent the effects of



violent agitation ; also to increase the supply of water, and introduce, if necessary, ice, as a cooling medium, into the cistern from which that supply is drawn.

## THE JOLLY ANGLER.

### I.

BELOW a shady hazel-tree  
An angler trimm'd his flies,  
Singing, hey derry ! trout that are merry  
No longer—no longer are wise !

### II.

Of dapper make and ruddy hue,  
'Twas a jolly blade, I ween,  
With his hey derry—fresh from the ferry,  
Over the meadow so green.

### III.

Right gladsomely he eyed the stream,  
And shook his wand anon,  
With a hey derry—brown as a berry,  
The wandering waters run.

### IV.

Oh ! well I wot that ruddy blade  
Is one of our hearty band,  
With his hey derry—trout that are merry  
Swim to the angler's hand.

Derry hey derry—  
Trout that are merry  
Swim to the angler's hand.

## THE TRANSPLANTATION OF FRESH-WATER FISHES.

*Continued.*

THE perch is one of our fresh-water fishes which admits of being readily transplanted and made abundant. Its culture, however, as an article of food, or as a subject of sport, has not hitherto, in this country, received the attention it deserves. In the latter respect, certainly, its pretensions are not to be classed with those of the trout, but they are not altogether inadmissible. There is diversion, after its kind, in watching for the dip of one's float, near the edge of a lake or pool, in which you have reason to know that the fish in question are tolerably plentiful, and of a size, in the long-run, worth capturing,—diversion, sufficient at least, to content and even excite thousands among the Waltonian order of anglers; nay, to work upon the fancy, now and then, of the experienced slaughterer of trout and salmon. I admit, for my own part, under these circumstances, that I take special pleasure in a few hours' perch-fishing. The variety itself is most acceptable; and many a time would I gladly exchange, on that score alone, a promising forenoon's sport on Tweed or Teviot for a quiet fling in Yetholm or Pasten Loch, two well-known preserves situated at the foot of the Cheviots, the nearer of them being within an hour's drive of Kelso.

Indeed, notwithstanding the clamour against bait-fishing raised in certain quarters, I feel inclined to hold the opinion that diversity in one's sport gives a sustaining relish to every individual branch of it; and that an occasional indulgence, by way, as it were, of interlude, in the tamer and ruder, adds to the enjoyment of the more exciting and refined department. I have frequently also, among rod-fishers of my acquaintance, adepts in trout and salmon-slaying, noticed, that however much at starting they may affect, in the way of comparison, to despise the amusement of perch-fishing, they will quickly enter into the spirit of it, as a

diversion, when the game is fairly set a-going, and evince by their keenness that, in the sudden dive of the float and the leisurely sailing out of the line, under conduct now and then of a two-pound fish, they experience a fair measure of satisfaction.

As an article of food the flesh of the perch is in good esteem—very superior to that of the carp, the tench, the bream, and the chub, and is held preferable by many to the flesh of the common trout. When in season, its firmness and curdy whiteness rival the same qualities as they are displayed in some of our most highly-prized salt-water fishes—the sole, for instance, and the red gurnard. One of the drawbacks to its more frequent appearance at the table, results from the supposed necessity, before cooking it, of removing the tough coat of scales and spinous fins with which, for defensive purposes, it is accoutred,—an operation, no doubt, which, when performed on a number of small-sized perch, involves a great deal of trouble. In the cooking of perch, however, be it known that the flaying operation is against all rule, and contrary to the practice of the experienced cook, whose aim it is, or ought to be, to keep intact the flavour of the fish, and preserve to it its juices and commendable properties. On Lentrathan Loch, and other famed perch-yielding expanses, it is considered barbarous to subject this fish to any other process, before brandering, than that of simply wiping it. Were proper attention paid to the culture of the perch, in the way of an endeavour to improve its size, a step would be gained towards its being more generally appreciated as an article of diet, if not as a delicacy. With a great many of our landed proprietors who rigidly preserve the aqueous portions of their domains, a notion prevails that by such a system of conservation they help, not only to augment the numbers, but also to improve the size and condition of the finny stock. They may succeed, I allow, in effecting one of these two objects; but should they do so, it is at the cost, proportionally incurred, of the other: the increase

in size and quality in most instances giving way before the increase in numbers. This effect of injudicious conservation I have seen exemplified over and over again. It has been commented on before me more than once by the parties most interested, but always under the impression on their part that the deterioration in question proceeded either from some undiscovered cause, or from an infringement of the system they were acting on, whereas the mischief complained of arose from the system itself, and nothing else.

In the transportation of live perch from one pond to another, the same plan which I have recommended to be used with tench may be safely adopted. It will be found attended with a great deal less trouble and hazard than that of carrying the fish in a barrel or pitcher. Even barrel-bulk, without a change of water, or the assistance of an air-restorer, will hardly suffice, at a temperature of 45° Fah., to convey three brace of perch, averaging half a pound, a ten hours' journey; whereas a wicker-work basket, occupying much less room, and, along with its contents, not one-sixth the weight, in which moistened grass has been placed, may, under proper management, be used as a safe medium in the transmission of double that number.

## MUSINGS.

### I.

WELCOME sweet southern showers !

Welcome ye early flowers

Woo'd by the bee !

Ever gentle and bland,

To all wights of the wand,

Welcome are ye !

### II.

Oft at the wintry fire,

Nursing our heart's desire,

Fondly we dream  
Of joy in the breeze—  
Singing-birds in the trees—  
Flowers by the stream.

## III.

Often our fancy brings  
Pictures of sunny things  
Home to our hearth ;  
And we seem as we stray'd  
Amid sunshine and shade—  
Music and mirth !

## IV.

Then with unconscious hand  
Grasp we the idle wand,  
Full of the boy,  
When to our sad surprise  
Swiftly the vision flies,  
Summer and Joy !

## THE TRANSPLANTATION OF FRESH-WATER FISHES.

*Continued.*

THE transportation of one and all of the different species of the *Salmonidæ* has, as far as experience goes, been attended with difficulty. In conducting it there is required the greatest care, both in the regulation of the temperature of the water and in the keeping up of a proper supply of oxygen—an element which the respiratory organs of the fish in question consume with some rapidity. The secret of success in transporting trout from one place to another, consists in employing as a medium the coldest and purest water that can be procured, and in giving plenty of accommodation in the vessel made use of to the subjects *in*

*transitu.* In water at or below a temperature of 40 degrees, grayling, trout, or parrs under six inches in length will survive a journey of three or four hours' continuance without exhibiting any marked symptoms of distress. With trout of much larger dimensions it is hazardous to deal in the way of transmission, without the aid of a force-pump or other apparatus, through means of which the consumption of oxygen in the water may become remedied. In addition to the oxygenizing, a refrigerative process might, I think, be introduced with happy effect, in the transfer of the *Salmonidæ*. An external application of ice to the vessel employed would be preferable, there can be no question, to an infusion or occasional admixture of the frozen element, which, as is well known, is incapable, however much it may serve to lower the temperature of the aqueous medium, of giving forth the sustentative principle, in shape of oxygen. The conversion of water into ice by the abstraction of the air, an experiment which every one has seen performed, is sufficiently elucidatory on this point.

## THE KING O' THE CAULD.

### I.

OWER at the cauld-foot,  
There bides an auld troot,  
No mony there be that are wiser ;  
It baffles a' skill  
To tether his gill,  
An' gi'e the sly boy a surpriser.

### II.

He's thick an' he's braid,  
Wi' sprecks lik a taed,  
An' spangles o' ilka dimension ;

Mirk spangles an' reid,  
Frae his tail to his heid,  
In number ayont comprehension.

## III.

Sic a swasher, I ween,  
Is rare to be seen,  
An' no to be grippit wi' thinkin' ;  
It gars ilka chiel  
Lay his loof on his reel,  
An' sets e'en the wisest a-blinkin'.

## IV.

Auld Purdie cam' doon  
Ae braw afternoon,  
(Ilk angler tak's wale o' his weather,)  
Quoth he, 'I'll sune bring  
The rogue to the spring,  
An' teach him the taste o' a feather !'

## V.

Sae e'en he set till't,  
Like ane muckle skill't,  
But faith ! let the braggin' come last o't ;  
Frae the mirk to the dawin',  
In spite o' his crawin',  
He ne'er could mak' out the richt cast o't.

## VI.

There was Foster and Kerss,  
An' a chiel frae the Merse  
Wad set a' the water a-seethin' ;  
Watty Grieve an' Jock Hay  
Cam' ower the way,  
Wi' Scougal o' fair Innerleithen.

## VII.

The mair were the han's,  
 The rifer the wan's,  
 Our king o' the cauld grew the braver ;  
 He bobbit aboot  
 Wi' his wonderfu' snoot,  
 An' cockit his tail out o' favour.

## VIII.

But cast as they nicht,  
 To the left or the richt,  
 Wi' mennin, flee, crayper, or rawin' ;  
 No a rug wud he gi'e,  
 For wèl ettled he  
 O' the gear whilk the wind was a-blawin'.

## IX.

Come, anglers, come a',  
 Baith meikle and sma',  
 Tak' yer fling at the cunnin' auld reiver ;  
 For aught that ye ken,  
 Mither Fortune may len'  
 Gude speed to yer wan's, an' ye deive her.

## THE EFFECTS OF TRANSPLANTING TROUT.

AN error prevails, and is encouraged by some writers on fish-culture, viz., that in plenishing a stream, lake, or pond with fresh-water trout, it is of great importance, in order to secure a superior quality of fish, to levy the supplies from a well-reputed stock, such, for instance, as that of Loch Leven. The mistake consists chiefly in overlooking the qualification of the stream or



lake intended to be stocked or replenished for sustaining, up to the required mark, the breed in question, whether in the shape of fry or in a more adult form. To test and ascertain this fitness, before committing one's-self to the experiment, will save, in most cases, both trouble and expense. The stocking of artificial ponds with the Loch Leven breed has frequently been undertaken, indeed it is an experiment of old date, but in no one instance that I am acquainted with has it fulfilled what I am entitled to suppose were the anticipations of those interested in the results, whereas, in the case of other well-known artificial ponds or reservoirs, with which no pains in the way of stocking them from extraneous sources had been taken, the result has been a very superior caste, both as regards size and quality, of fresh-water trout, the origin of which may be traced simply to the rill or brook acting the part of main feeder to the reservoir.

What I maintain is this, that, in rearing a trout stock, its antecedents are of secondary consideration; that the accommodation given, in the shape of feeding-grounds, shelter, etc., is of primary importance; that, in default of such auxiliaries, the best reputed breeds will quickly become deteriorated, and aided by them, mere starvelings, those freckled pigmies which in their native rills were never known to exceed in length six or seven inches, will attain large dimensions, and acquire in a very brief space of time that curdiness, richness of flavour, and fine internal colour which characterizes, when in condition, our best trout.

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## SEA-FISHING.

SEA-FISHING with the line and hook is greatly dependent, for its character as an amusement, upon fine weather, and the mode

in which it is pursued. Some of the fish on our Scottish coasts are of a much more sportive nature than others. Among these, the one of which there is the greatest abundance holds a prior claim upon our notice,—I mean the pollack. This fish, which, although its appearance is in its favour, for it has a symmetrical build, and both fore and aft is well-shaped and proportioned, engages little attention from the British public in an edible point of view. As an article of food, in many of the places where it is caught, it is no doubt used extensively, but it is rarely brought to market under any one of its numerous designations. That species or variety, however, named the lythe, in its adult stage is by no means bad eating. It excels, in my estimation, the mackerel and the rock-cod, particularly in respect to firmness,—a quality which, I am quite aware, London epicures hold in disregard; so also do those habit and repute *fush*-eaters, the Shetlanders, who give preference to this, their usual diet, when it has arrived at a state bordering on decomposition. Such a perverted taste cultivated at the extremes of the island is happily not universal. It does not prevail, as yet at least, in respect to the king of fishes, in such royal landing-places as Newburgh, Speymouth, and Berwick-on-Tweed, where, without a certain amount of curdiness and consistency, fish-flesh is held in utter disrelish, the cooking and flavouring of it with rich sauces being looked upon as a direct interference with its flavour and wholesome properties.

The pollack of our coasts admits of at least two distinct species, the saithe or coal-fish (*Merlangus carbonarius*), and the whiting-pollack, or lythe. These, in their early stages, are called indiscriminately podlies, dargies, cuddies, and sillocks. There is scarcely a rock or harbour connected with our shores round which they are not established in various depths of water, according to their size and the season of the year. The largest are usually found in tangle-covert, at a depth varying from two

to four or five fathoms, off the points or headlands, the smaller ones edging in with the flow of the tide among the creeks and baylets. They may be taken either from the rocks or from a boat, when the sea is not too rough, at almost every stage of the tide; but their favourite feeding-time commences about an hour and a half after its turn, whether at flow or ebb (the former period being the preferable), and extends over two or three hours. The neap-tides are also more advantageous than the spring or stream tides for fishing in, the currents being less violent. In the latter end of August, and throughout September, after the herrings have spawned, and the fry begin to make their appearance, immense numbers both of saithe and lythe are occasionally to be met with pressing shorewards in pursuit of the young fish.

In the month of August 1843, I was sojourning with my family at Eyemouth, on the coast of Berwickshire, when an occurrence of the above description took place. I happened to be walking on the sheltered piece of beach belonging to the little bay or cove on the north side of the harbour, when my attention became directed, the water being smooth, to the surface-breakings of numerous fish close to the promontory called the Fort, a spot where Cromwell and his troops are said to have encamped. On approaching the water's edge I found it actually fringed with herring-fry, thousands upon thousands of the length of one's finger thronging in, in solid masses, towards a corner of the bay. So plentiful were they that they could be taken up in 'neivefu's;' and the filling by my children of a large pitcher with the primest of them did not occupy five minutes. There could be no mistake as to the cause of this hurry-scurry and disastrous confusion, or as to the sort of fish in pursuit of the infant shoal. The opportunity thus offering itself for an onslaught was not to be neglected. I had plenty at hand of the right sort of tackle, and having engaged a boat and the assist-

ance of a man and lad to manage it, in the course of half an hour I was busy at work among the marauders.

The tackle usually employed by me, I may here mention, consists of a set of tinned hooks (which not only show better, but take on the rust less speedily than the ordinary steeled wires) corresponding in size to Nos. 14, 15, and 16 Adlington, and tied on triple or strong single gut. The rejected threads of a salmon-hank are reserved by me for this or a similar purpose. Several slips of white feather, two inches, or two inches and a half in length, from the quill of a goose or swan, are fastened to the shank-end of each hook; nor is it a bad plan to attach these again by a turn of white thread to the bend of the wire, or immediately above it. Linen-thread is commonly made use of for this purpose. The body of the lythe-fly, when mackerel are reported to be off the coast, is sometimes made of crimson or orange-coloured wool, laced with tinsel. I prefer it plain white, but have no objection to its being wound over with silver-twist, or, what is still better, a thin stripe of skin taken from the belly of the gurnard. This skin is remarkable for its lustrous purity and toughness. It is frequently made use of as a lure, independent of feather, and might be employed with advantage in the fabrication of the artificial minnow for trout-fishing. The simplest, and not the least deadly way of using it, is to cut it with the penknife or a pair of scissors into the shape of a small fish, the size and figure of which find their best representative in the old-fashioned mother-of-pearl card-counter. In baiting, thrust the tinned-hook through at the eye-point, allowing the piece of skin to dangle from the bend. Another method is to insert the hook about two-thirds of the way down, and tie up the skin at its shank-end.

In fishing with the lythe fly, although the hand-line will generally answer the purpose, it may be found more convenient, especially in shoal water where rocks and tangles abound, to

employ a stiff tie-rod, twelve feet or so in length, made of well-seasoned ash. A salmon reel, provided with seventy or eighty yards of stout oiled cord, will in this case be required, and a couple of swivels, one attached immediately above the plumb, and the other below it, about three yards' distance from the hook, are next thing to indispensable. The rings on the rod, whether fixed or movable, should be large and strong. In plumbing the line, weights, varying from two ounces up to a pound, are required. In mackerel-fishing, with the running hand-line, under a stiffish breeze, it will often be found necessary to increase the plumbing to six, eight, or even ten pounds. In order to keep the line from kinking, and give play to the lure or fly, it will be found expedient, besides employing a brass swivel at the head of the traces, to make use of a pin or wedge of ash, hickory, or whalebone, in length about ten inches, and as thick nearly as one's little finger. This should be used, either inserted into the plummet or sinker, so as to project from it six or seven inches, or made fast to the main line immediately above it, the traces, or foot-line, being secured to it by a succession of hitch-knots.

On the occasion I refer to, no plumbing to talk of was necessary, the pursuing body, which comprised saithe, lythe, and large podlies, having, under unusual circumstances, been tempted away from their ordinary beats into shoal water. The mere contact of the hook with the surface, in fact, brought the fish up to the scratch. No sooner had the boat cleared the sandy part of the bay, and approached the rocks, than the sport commenced. I had provided myself with an old triple gut casting-line used for salmon-fishing, attaching to it, by way of a bob and trailer, two lythe flies. From this arrangement no disadvantage accrued, so long as the bottom was comparatively free of sea-weed, and I had the mere stragglers to deal with; but in rowing in where the fish showed thickest, and the tangles below lay dense, the snapping of my line, through the agency of a brace of lythe,

which simultaneously seized the hooks and rushed off in different directions, convinced me that the safer and speedier way of carrying on would be with the single fly. This casualty occurred after the capture of exactly a score of fish. My line being repaired, however, I soon began to lose all idea of committing to figures the exact amount of the afternoon's slaughter. For the space of nearly four hours, it was a continuous and uncere-monious dragging in of pollacks, large and middle-sized. Among the large ones, several exceeded in weight seven or eight pounds. A much greater number ranked betwixt five and two pounds; whereas the smallest astir on that memorable occasion exceeded in size the usual run of the podley tribe in that neighbourhood, one which much exceeds that of the podlies in the Firth of Forth. Some estimate of the quantity caught on that afternoon's fishing may be formed from the circumstance that, on entering Eyemouth harbour, at dusk, nine hampers or creels of fish, each creel requiring two persons to carry it, were conveyed ashore. Of these a proportion, numbering nearly a hundred, was taken, by means of a short hand-line, by my eldest son, then a boy of ten years old.

In the same year, about the end of July, I caught, with the herring-jiggers, as they are called, two large specimens of the coal-fish, weighing severally upwards of twenty pounds. Herring jigging, or jiggering, is a method of catching that invaluable fish not generally known. It is carried on off the Berwickshire coast, at the commencement of the season, before the fish incline to come near the surface, and within scope of the nets. The herrings taken by this expedient are among the best, in point of condition, caught off the east coast of Scotland.

The jigger may be described as a ladder, supported, in the shape of strong cord-line, by a central stay, the cross-bars or steps of which are formed of pieces of whalebone twenty inches in length, and in thickness corresponding to the ribs of an

umbrella, out of which, when in a wrecked state, they are usually constructed. From these, which are arranged five or six inches apart along the mainstay, are made to project, busked with white waxed thread upon hog's bristles, five inches in length, small tinned hooks. The series of cross bars may be extended to twelve, in which case twenty-four hooks will be required. It is chiefly in the tinning and size of the wire used, calling forth, as these unquestionably do, the resemblance of some small fish or sea-insect newly started into existence, that the attractive power lies; and although naturalists of repute have expressed their belief that the food of the herring consists of very minute animalculæ, I am satisfied, for my part, of the inclination of this fish to prey upon larger objects when presenting themselves. The tinned hook they probably mistake for some small fish, and seize it greedily, under the circumstances above-mentioned.

Jiggering for herring is usually carried on at a depth of water varying from eight to twenty fathoms. It is only during calm weather, for an hour or two before sunset, or at sunrise, that it can be pursued with success.

A curious circumstance, which bears to some extent on the natural history of the herring, was urged upon my attention while amusing myself with the jiggers off Eyemouth. The boat, of which I formed one of the party, had hit upon a shoal of fine herrings, and we had just commenced hauling them in by threes and fours, when suddenly, rounding St. Abb's Head, hove in sight one of the large steamers which ply betwixt Granton and London. Although the vessel itself was at the distance of several miles, the tremor communicated by it had its instantaneous effect upon the fish, which, in ten or twelve fathoms' water, had risen in a body at least one-third of that depth from the bottom. The whole shoal sank immediately, and refused to bite. This, the fishermen who were with me declared, is the invariable effect

produced by the approach or passing by of a large steamer. The question arises, may not some of the other fishes on our coast be affected in a corresponding manner by steam navigation?

Many of the rivers in the United States, which, it is well known, swarmed formerly with salmon, are now destitute of them altogether; and I was recently told by a gentleman from New York, that the introduction and increase of steam navigation are confidently placed to account for their disappearance. If this be the case, it is high time to determine the amount of injury inflicted on our salmon rivers, the Tay and Tweed in particular, by the laying on at their mouths of steam passage-boats, I do not speak of tugs, which have become a necessity, but of those vessels, which at all states of the tide, every half-hour or oftener, plough across the direct course of the salmon, and communicate their tremulous movements to a large and important portion of the estuary.

## OUT OF THE GALLERY OF MEMORY.

### I.

I sit by the river and weep a farewell,  
My musings have grown to regrets,  
As I gaze on the tranquil stream leaving the dell,  
And the fishermen shooting their nets.

### II.

Roll back on the memory summers of joy,  
And the shadowy sands of the Past,  
Discover the wandering tracks of the boy  
Uninjured by billow or blast.



## III.

Ah ! each feat and each frolic—the pastimes of old,—  
They seem as if left for me yet ;  
While a-near on the indolent pool I behold  
The fisherman shooting his net.

## IV.

But see ! how the silvery salmon springs  
Exultant under the shade ;  
And the trout is rearing its wily rings  
Before me, all unafraid.

## V.

Why grasp at the wand ? what matters it now  
That they range unalarm'd to my feet,  
And alway, as the alder-fly drops from the bough,  
Their wandering circles repeat ?

## VI.

Despoil'd of the sorrowless scenes of my youth,  
I may toil my past loves to forget ;  
But Mem'ry will keep 'mid her portraits of Truth,  
The fisherman shooting his net !

THE herring jigger should be plumbed in the same way as the hand-line ordinarily made use of, having a cross-bar of stout iron wire or whalebone, from the centre of which the lead is suspended by a piece of cord two or three feet in length. By the fishermen on some parts of the Fife coast the cross-bar in hand-line fishing is considered inconvenient ; one hook only is employed, and the plummet attached a short way above the snood or tippet.

On reaching the presumed herring-ground, the boat having

swung to anchor, the jiggers are lowered without delay, and on the lead touching the bottom, are slowly and cautiously drawn up towards the surface. This is done for the purpose of ascertaining the presence of fish, and also of determining the exact depth of water at which they have taken up their position. Should the herrings be present in any quantity, the jigger, in its progress through the shoal, will indicate their whereabouts, in respect to depth, by the occurrence of a slight nibbling sensation, which communicates itself to the hand, and is intelligible to all anglers. When this sensation becomes evident, a knot should be made in the hand-line, which shall serve as a regulator when the apparatus is re-lowered, and conduct without loss of time to the feeding-ground.

Having tied your knot, the operation of a few seconds, move the line gently up and down with the hand. You will thus attract the fish, and multiply your chances of a good haul. You then up with your jigger, which, if fortunate, you will find graced with a double row of sparkling herrings, as many sometimes as eight or nine at a lift; seldom, if you have hit upon fair fishing-ground, fewer than three or four. These you get quit of by a shake of the apparatus, when they will fall to the bottom of the boat, and shortly expire. No time should be lost in re-committing the jigger to the water, and allowing the line to run freely off through your hand, as far as the check-knot. You cannot, in fact, do so too quickly, unless you are in quest of saithe or dog-fish. For the first quarter of an hour or thereabouts, it is seldom that any interruption will occur from these intruders, and one accordingly ought to make the most of it. The crowding of the herrings towards the jiggers, and the glittering of the fish struggling on the tinned hooks, rarely however fail to attract them, and that usually at the moment when the sport has become exciting, and you have begun to congratulate yourself on the prospect of its continuance.

Under such circumstances it was, the jiggers working merrily, that the large saithe referred to were taken; the more common and less acceptable assailants are dog-fish. On the occasion of these saithe being entangled on the jigger-hooks; the advice I received from the fishermen was to employ main force, and take my chance of sacrificing both fish and tackle to the exigency of the moment. Neither the one nor the other was of much consideration; but I had no notion of parting with them so unceremoniously; and as there was plenty of spare line, I tried the experiment, in both cases, of allowing the fish a little of their own way, the bottom being clear of tangles. I had armed the hooks on my jigger with stout pieces of salmon-gut, instead of bristles, so that I could keep a pretty tight rein on the movements of the saithe. After a few strong pushes, like those of a kelted salmon in dead water, I succeeded in bringing them to the top, within reach of the gaff-hook.

The chief nuisance, in the shape of predatory fish, met with on the east coast of Scotland, is the picked dog-fish (*Galeus acanthias sive spinax*). It is impossible to estimate the enormous amount of damage done annually, both by it and the coal-fish, to our herring and salmon fishings. All the mischief proceeding from seals and porpoises is a mere trifle in comparison. The instincts of the coal-fish lead them to watch for the descent of the smolts at the mouths of our rivers, into the estuaries of which they press in great numbers, the dog-sharks carrying on their depredations further out to sea. To the ravages committed by the black pollacks, the fishermen at Tweedmouth can bear testimony, as scarcely a day passes during the smolt season in which they fail to secure quantities of them. The examination of a single specimen on these occasions will often excite surprise; four or five smolts undergoing the digestive operation, being frequently abstracted from a podley not two pounds in weight. It would dishearten as well as astonish our friends at Stormontfield,

were they to be made acquainted in full with the hazards run by their petted pondlings, at their entrance into the sea-world.

As to the mischief wrought by the dog-fish, it chiefly discovers itself in their attacks upon the haddock-lines and herring-nets; but there can be little doubt, judging from the position of their encampments on our coast-line, that, in their turn, the migratory fry of our rivers engage their attention to a large extent. I may be wrong, but the impression holds with me that the fishermen of our coasts don't exercise much judgment in their dealings with this fish, and take little pains either of one sort or another to keep it under. The occasion which led to this impression is certainly not very recent; but I am tempted to relate it, as it bears upon an expedient which, I think, if adopted, might assist to keep in check the increase of this marauder. I happened to be out all night with the herring-fleet belonging to Eymouth, and having no idea of being a mere spectator of its operations, had provided myself with a stout hand-line, in the prospect of hauling up a few cod or skate during the intervals set apart for the drifting of the net. A more inviting evening could scarcely have been selected. The sea itself was in such phosphorescent state, so full of living splendour, that no poetical description I ever happened on could do justice to it. Our progress to the fishing-ground, which lay five or six miles from the coast, was managed under sail, with the exception of a mile or two at start; but it was ploughing through silver the whole course.

On arriving at the spot, after the nets were dropped, and the drift-rope connecting them made fast to the bow of the boat, my hand-line was brought into requisition, temptingly set off with morsels of fresh-herring—a more acceptable bait than the sand-lance, the lug-worm, or even the mussel, to large fish. The hooks made use of were busked on black horse-hair snoods, loosely twisted, and of considerable strength. A cross-bar of iron wire, with plummet appended, assisted to separate and steady them

when lowered. Scarcely had the hooks touched the bottom when I felt a bite, and tugging smartly, was fast in a fish, which I was in hopes might turn out to be a cod or ling. Under this expectation I bent over the edge of the boat while hauling up line, in order to get a view of my prize, the calm and phosphorescent state of the sea enabling me to discover objects in agitation at a great depth. The suspicion that I had got hold of a dog-fish had just come across me, when suddenly, without any extra strain having been put upon it, my line became lightened of its burden. The snood, in fact, immediately above the hook, had been bitten through. The same thing happened three or four times in succession, on the tackle being renewed. I could not, of course, knowing what I had to deal with, have expected otherwise; but I was unwilling to quit the hope of falling in with more valuable booty. The fishermen, however, gave me no encouragement to persevere, and evidently looked upon my proceedings as a needless waste of tackle. I was on the point at length of submitting to their views, when it occurred to me, instead of large tinned hooks tied on horse-hair snoods, to make use of a couple of the double gorge-hooks employed in catching pike, several of which, fitted up with twisted brass wire, I happened to have along with me. The idea was an excellent one, and being acted on led to the capture, in a short space of time, of nearly a score of these petty sharks. What helped to impress the circumstance on my memory was the attention excited by it among the boat's crew, to whom the gorge-hook was a novelty, and who apparently were delighted in seeing the dogs dealt with in such a summary manner. The office of extracting the hooks they took upon them with great gusto, and I must say that in this part of the business I had little inclination to give a helping hand.

Arising from what took place, it may be asked, Might not something be done, through change of tackle, to obviate the loss

which in that material alone is annually incurred by the use of the horse-hair imp or tippet, as the snood is termed in Scotland, say, through the substitution of gimp or prepared wire? Being viviparous, the hoe or dog-fish cannot be set down as a prolific breeder, but it is gregarious in its habits, and the numbers which for predatory purposes occasionally assemble off our British shores are astonishing. There appears on some parts of the coast a strong prejudice against the flesh of the dog-fish as an article of food. In others it is made use of chiefly in a dried or salted state. I have tasted it, not as treated by the fishermen, but fresh, and found it quite palatable, more so than that of the wolf-fish or sea-cat, which was served at table on the same occasion, and by some pronounced excellent meat, notwithstanding the forbidding and ferocious appearance of the animal.

In many of the small harbours appertaining to the fishing villages on our coasts, the wasteful, disgusting, and unhealthy practice prevails, in clearing the herring-nets, of throwing the dogs and diseased fish overboard among the moorings, and allowing them to float to and fro in the tideway, and accumulate on the beach in large quantities, vitiating both air and water. I have noticed this particularly of late years in connexion with Eyemouth and Holy Island, and it excites my surprise that such a practice should receive no attention from the Fishery Board, or fail to be dealt with by this or other commission. Looking upon them in an economical point of view, these fish, if regularly collected and stowed away in an appropriate depot, could readily be converted into valuable manure, and be made, with little trouble, a source of increased revenue to the fishermen themselves as a community.

## A CRUEL DRINKING-SONG.

## I.

DEATH! death to the bald-heads—no quarter!  
The rogues, they shall taste of our steel;  
We'll give each a turn of the torture,  
And lay him agape in the creel.

## II.

Drink death to the bald-heads! Why spare them  
To revel in plunder and gore?  
Forbearance to plead, we can dare them,  
So replenish the goblet once more.

## III.

Our wands to good fortune they guide us,  
Meanwhile bear the cup to the mouth;  
Let the break of grey twilight decide us,  
And winds wand'ring soft from the south.

## IV.

We anglers should quaff and be jolly,  
Ere the time to be doing draws nigh,  
Short season will sleep away folly,  
And we'll up with the lark by and by.

## V.

Drink death to the bald-heads—no quarter!  
Why spare the sly rogues of the brook?  
We'll give each a turn of the torture—  
Drink success to the wand and the hook!

## SEA-FISHING.

*Concluded.*

THE coast of Fife, compared with a large stretch of our sea-margins, is, generally speaking, with respect to scenery, of an unpretending character. There are some points belonging to it, however, which are far from being destitute of sublimity; nothing, I admit, like what is possessed of this feature by many of our grand old headlands, such as St. Abb's or the Bullers of Buchan, or the Stacks of Duncansbay, or those massive breakwaters extending down from Cape Wrath to the Solway, which stem the storms of the Atlantic. Still the term 'sublime' may very appropriately be applied to them, even in their usual bearing. Of those coast-line attractions, one or two of the more prominent adjoin the small town called the Earl's-Ferry, near which I engaged some years ago summer quarters, and took a humble part in the crusade ever carrying on betwixt pole and pole against the subjects of the briny sea-god. In particular, there is a huge wall of rock, nearly two hundred feet in height, Kincaraig by name, lying about a mile to the westward, perforated with caves, one of which, accessible at low water, tradition reports to have been occupied by Macduff, Thane of Fife, as a place of concealment from the vengeance of the usurper Macbeth. The entrance to this retreat presents an imposing appearance. On the cliff above, the eye may detect a falcon's nest securely situated in a fissure of the crag. I observed its tenant one evening in the act of making a successful stoop on what appeared to be a young rabbit. The cave itself, in its present state, being choked up with fragments of rock and masonry, is of no great depth. There are other two natural excavations not far from it, one of which, quaintly termed the Deil's Lug, promises to be a subject of more lengthened investigation; but it can only be explored at the risk of a broken neck. Sea-caverns of the same



description abound on the Fife coast. They are nearly all connected with historical traditions. One near Wemyss, termed the King's Cave, was the scene of an adventure met with by James IV. Another, of considerable amplitude, and chiselled over with rude hieroglyphics, is said to have been used as a temporary place of encampment for his army by one of our earlier Scottish kings. Robbers, smugglers, the Danes and other Northmen, in their invasions, are all mixed up with the history of these subterraneous recesses. I recollect, when a boy, being incited, by some relation of the defeat of a Danish force by Banquo, one of Macbeth's comrades-in-arms, A.D. 1040, to dig in the sand, not far from a choked-up hollow belonging to the series, at a spot supposed to have been a centre-point in the struggle, and turning up, along with human bones, pieces of metal, which I had reason to conjecture were the remains of armour or iron harness belonging to the discomfited invaders. Another of these caves, lying to the eastward of Kinghorn, is associated in my personal recollections with the death of a seal, which, when wandering in quest of sea-fowl, I came suddenly upon, basking at full spread on the rocks at low-tide. I was armed on the occasion with an old musket, the contents of which were unceremoniously discharged at the head of the poor animal before it was actually aware of my presence.

Reverting to the sea-caves at Kincraig, it was almost immediately facing them, and stretching west towards a bay famed equally in song and in story, that I prosecuted my summer's sport. Who is there among the lovers of Scottish song but has listened with delight to that winning melody, 'Weel may the Boatie row,' and treasures up those simple words—

'We cast our lines in Largo Bay,  
An' fishes we caught nine;  
There's three to fry, and three to boil,  
An' three to bait the line.'

And who in the wide world has not heard of Alexander Selkirk? A rough commonplace vagabond he is said to have been, but the prototype, nevertheless, of 'Robinson Crusoe' in Defoe's admirable fiction. In the neighbourhood of my fishing-ground, Largo Bay, and Largo, the birthplace of this hero, formed part and parcel of the objects of interest within view. Away from them are to be seen, in varying distinctness, the Bass Rock—famous as a State prison in olden days, and famed still as the headquarters of the solan goose,—North Berwick Law, and, occupying a prominent place at the mouth of the Firth, the Isle of May. To the west, in the landscape, the Lomonds of Fife lift up their heads, leading the thoughts of the angler across from the sea-depths to Leven Loch, contiguous to which, in the north-west, their base extends.

Associations such as these, romantic, songful, and historical, with the surrounding scenery, have a powerful effect in rendering sea-fishing an agreeable sport. I have but vaguely hinted at a small portion of them, for Fifeshire, in its coast-line particularly, with its numerous castles, battle-fields, religious edifices, abbeys, cathedrals, palaces, and royal as well as baronial burghs, is rich in great memorials. Without some tie to *terra firma*, the amusement, generally speaking, soon flags. The heart for it requires to be kept up by auxiliary objects, which, in the case of river and lake-fishing, as we all know, are seldom wanting. It is true that the sea itself will now and then present phenomena sufficiently attractive to give zest to the fisher's occupation. But such phenomena are rare, or appreciable only by the few, and cannot, as enhancing sport, be put into competition with coast-scenery in the combination spoken of.

In the year reverted to, the kindness of a gentleman in the neighbourhood placed at my service a nice little pinnace, which I made use of more or less daily for about three weeks, generally in the afternoon and evening. Being a light craft, a couple of

stout boys could manage her with ease, so far as rowing went, and it was more convenient, as well as safer, in lythe-fishing close to the rocks, to make use of the oars. Had the presence of mackerel in the Firth been ascertained, it would have invited to a more open range of water, and called the latter into requisition. Our afternoon fishing parties occasionally brought three rods into play, but we found two a more convenient number, especially under sail, when it was necessary to tack about every five minutes and haul in line. The lythes, which were far from numerous, were fallen in with on marked ground, off the headlands,—rarely among the coves or small bays. In the latter, however, we found the black pollack, rock-cod, and gurnards, the last-mentioned fish in great, almost troublesome abundance. We also secured some fair specimens, ranging from four up to six pounds, of the keeling or common cod-fish. To take cod with the lythe-fly or white feather, it is necessary to keep the hook well sunk, and slacken the pace of the boat. A lug-worm run up over the wire will be found to act as a strong incentive, and insure, in case the fish should miss its aim, a renewal of the attack. The gurnards taken were mostly of the grey species (*Trigla gurnardus*), but off Elieness, while cruising for mackerel about a couple of miles from the shore, I hit upon some fine specimens of the rocket or red gurnard (*Trigla cuculus*).

What draws the attention of the captor on his first acquaintance with the gurnard, is the singular faculty this fish appears to possess, of emitting sounds when expiring. These, which proceed from the escape of the air or gases in its singularly formed swimming-bladders, have been compared to the note of the cuckoo, hence the term *cuculus* applied to one of the species; but they are better described in the general designation gurnard, the ventriloquial sounds emitted more resembling repetitions of the monosyllable *gurr*. In many parts of Scotland this fish is called

a *crooner*, the verb 'to croon' signifying to utter a low plaint or singing sound, expressive of grief or dole. The irritability of the gurnard also attracts notice, forming, as it does, a marked contrast with the conduct of most fishes when captured. It is in the habit, on finding itself transferred to the boat, of erecting imposingly and menacingly its spiked fins, apparently conscious that its power of offence and causing apprehension lies solely in this manœuvre; nor are the prickles with which it is furnished, its operculum as well as dorsal ridge being pointed off with these weapons, to be treated, in their wounding capacity, as simple needle-thrusts. Poison lurks in them to an extent sufficient to induce dangerous inflammation, and the precaution of gloving, or otherwise shielding the hand, should always be taken. The flesh of the gurnard is really excellent, and resembles that of the perch, one of the best of our fresh-water fishes. Neither of them, however, is in favour with the cook, as the flaying of them causes trouble, and is accompanied with some risk.

When fishing with the lythe-fly off the Kincraig rocks, I noticed, on more than one of the small cod taken by me, clinging to the exterior, on different parts of the head and body, the veritable *Monoculus piscinus*, which, as a parasite, is generally thought to be peculiar to the salmon, and supposed by some fishermen to form such a source of annoyance to that fish as to account for the appearance in our rivers of the spring 'schule.' As to the identity of the insect observed by me with the salmon-tormentor or sea-louse, I could entertain no doubt; but having failed to discover it on the pollack or gurnard, the only deduction I feel inclined to draw from its appearance on the *Morrhua vulgaris* is with respect to the marine habitat of the salmon, viz., that it corresponds with the anchorage-ground taken up off our coasts by the common cod or keeling.

A good boat, properly manned, and fine weather, are indispensable in order to enjoy sea-fishing. The gratification also

derived from its pursuit as a sport, is, as I have already said, greatly dependent upon the character of the scenery in view. I know of few places on the east coast of Scotland that can vie with St. Abb's Head, in adding to the attractions of this amusement—none where, personally, I have entered into its spirit with so much enthusiasm, or felt so inclined to give it preference even to salmon-fishing. The elevation of the animal spirits consequent on being wafted or impelled over the glassy waves at the base of stupendous cliffs perforated with caverns and fronted with fantastically-shaped rocks, rising, some of them, in a detached state, in form of cathedral spires, cannot well be expressed. The great variety of aquatic birds—gulls, cormorants, terns, guillemots, oyster-catchers, and solan geese—which arrest the eye, all assist to produce this elevation; so also, on a favourable day, does the character of the sport met with.

In the months of July and August 1862, while sojourning at Eyemouth (confessedly during the herring-fishing season not the cleanliest of sea-bathing quarters), I took several opportunities, accompanied by my youngest son, a sailor by profession, of crossing Coldingham Bay in a punt, for I could not procure anything better on permanent hire at the fishing village above mentioned, to the foot of this noble promontory. Of course, as a means of propulsion, the oar alone could be made use of; the punt, as every one knows, being a flat-bottomed boat, unprovided with a keel, and only adapted for river or harbour use. Its want of grasp upon the water, should a breeze spring up, or when the tides run strong, renders it a dangerous kind of craft to venture in off an exposed coast. However, I could procure nothing else that was at all manageable, without the necessity of engaging at least a couple of hands, which I occasionally did, along with a more suitable boat, when the state of the weather required it.

From this punt, sometimes with the hand-line, and at anchor, but more frequently by trolling with the white-fly under oars, we

made some very satisfactory captures of fish ; our average weight, on the generality of occasions, exceeding a hundred pounds. With the hand-line, using slips of fresh herring as bait, our takes consisted of flounders, rock-cod, saithe, podlies, gurnards, and whittings. On one occasion, at a spot where the gurnards were very numerous, I hauled up, in company with one of them, what I recognised to be the gowdie or great weever, a fish that requires some caution in handling, as the spines of the dorsal fin are known to be highly venomous, and wounds inflicted by them are almost instantaneously followed by intense pain. The great weever appears not to be common on that part of the Scottish coast, as, on submitting it to the inspection of some of the Eyemouth fishermen, they declared their complete ignorance of it. One of the herring-fishers belonging to a Yarmouth boat recognised it at once, and gave his testimony as to the dangerous nature of the opercular and dorsal spines. Notwithstanding its offensive weapons, the great weever is held in estimation as food. Its general appearance also commends it to the eye.

On our trolling lines, using the white-fly with variations, in addition to gurnard and saithe, we caught several mackerel, and numbers of fine lythe, running from three up to six pounds in weight. Also, on one occasion, a herring, and a fine specimen of the gar-fish, or green-bone, another unusual visitor of our Scottish coast. A shot at a solan goose, gull, oyster-catcher, diver, hawk, cormorant, or rock-pigeon, occasionally presented itself, of which my son took advantage, with a fair amount of success.

My experience in sea-fishing, which I admit bears no proportion to my practice on our rivers, has nevertheless been sharpened by the latter ; and I feel authorized in consequence to state my belief that the art of taking fish, whether by trolling or hand-line, off our coasts, is as yet very imperfectly understood, and its pleasures, as a sport, very inadequately appreciated.

Many of those who have grown to be fond of it, have plainly, from what I observe, been initiated into its mysteries by the simple, hard-toiling fisherman, and adopted, along with the coarse tackle used by him, his conceits and prejudices. The employment of strong, coarse-looking tackle, on the long line set at night for cod, ling, skate, halibut, and other powerful fish, at a considerable distance from the shore, is rendered necessary, and forms, so far as we can ascertain, no drawback on success. But it is otherwise with the sportive fishes that resort in summer and autumn to our sea-fringes, and by daylight, when the weather is calm, can make use of the faculty of vision, which they possess in high perfection, to discern, as an adjunct to the lure offered them, a thick indigestible-looking piece of cord or plaited hair. I feel quite convinced that by the substitution of salmon-gut, twisted or single, for the clumsy traces usually employed, and by the bringing into play of brass swivels and revolving baits, a step will be taken towards rendering sea-fishing an exciting and delightful amusement.

## THE FAREWELL MEETING.

### I.

WE part not thus, nay, anglers ! nay,  
A farewell to the season !  
So fill the bowl and drink away—  
Who drinks not harbours treason.

### II.

Oh ! fill it high ! the joyous draught  
Is native to our heather ;  
If bravely drain'd and fondly quaff'd,  
'Twill bind our hearts together.

## III.

Now wintry winds with furious pace  
O'er moor and mountain sally,  
And gloomily the waters race  
Through each deserted valley.

## IV.

No longer birds in merry strain  
Sing from their bowers of beauty ;  
Lay down the wand ! the spring again  
Will call it forth for duty.

## V.

Lay down the wand—no longer now  
The starry trout is belling ;  
All leafless left, the alder bough  
Moans o'er his glassy dwelling.

## VI.

Then heap, heap high our social hearth !  
Why should the good fire flicker ?  
And quaff—quaff on ! the best of mirth  
Lies deepest in the liquor !

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A FEW OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHARR OF OUR  
SCOTCH LAKES.

WITH the celebrated charr of Windermere, I never had an opportunity, except in the potted state, of becoming acquainted. Its reputed spawning-ground, however, at the mouth of the Brathay, has been visited by me, and the general habits of this fish inquired into. As I am conversant, to some extent, with the charr found in several of our Scottish lakes, Loch Achilty in particular, I feel at liberty to remark on a feature which has not hitherto received attention, namely, the difference occurring in the conditions of the breeding-grounds of the Westmoreland and Highland charr. In Windermere these fish crowd up from the lake into the stream at its head, which is formed by the union, a short way up, of the Rothay and Brathay. The former, and more direct feeder, has a sandy bottom; that of the other, which traverses Langdale, is rocky, and covered, above the point of confluence, with weeds. Although the charr has been observed to enter the Rothay, they have never been known to conduct their spawning operations over its bed; but invariably, on discovering their mistake, they retrace their way back to the junction, and ascend the lateral water—a still portion of which, expanding into a small lake, forms their usual halting-place.

In the case of Loch Achilty, which lies about ten miles west of Dingwall, the spawning accommodation resorted to by the charr is exactly, in one respect at least, of an opposite character. This sheet of water, which is not more than three miles in circumference, occupies a romantic hollow in the ridge of high ground lying betwixt the Conon and the Rasay or Blackwater. On many accounts it is a remarkable and highly interesting lake; but chiefly from the circumstance of there being no visible outlet

or channel of discharge for its aqueous accumulations, notwithstanding that it possesses several sources of supply, one of which is entitled, from its dimensions, to be termed a burn or rivulet. The lie of the lake, and the direction taken by this feeder, assisted by other indices, lead to the assignation of an upper and lower end, the latter of which is located about a mile from the Blackwater, where it passes Contin Inn. There Loch Achilty (which, in the main, is of great depth, the converse in that respect, it has been alleged, of its Tor or highest approximate hill) becomes subjected to a change of condition, and shelves off in the form of a shoal, sandy at bottom, and mixed up irregularly, but, as far as scenery is concerned, attractively, with islets and wooded promontories. Although covered with fine gritty particles, the bed of the lake hereabouts is oozy, and of a spongy nature, leading to the conclusion, which is borne out by the occurrence of numerous springs below Contin Bridge, that the overcharge of Loch Achilty makes for itself a subterraneous escape from this quarter. Be that as it may, it is over the shallow sandy stretch in question, fronting Craig Darroch, that the charr invariably congregate for spawning purposes. In the principal feeder, which communicates with a chain of smaller lakes, three in number, they have never been observed; nor has an instance, as far as I can ascertain, ever occurred of their being taken in any of the superintending tarns; the central one of which, Loch Nech Beannh, is nearly a mile in circumference, and abounds with fine red-fleshed trout, averaging three quarters of a pound in weight. Why the Windermere charr should repudiate a sandy, and incline to a rocky bottom for spawning purposes, while those of Loch Achilty lean to the former, is a question for the naturalist to take up.

That the charr of Loch Achilty are not singular in their affection, at the breeding season, for the sandy shoals with which many of our Scottish lochs are furnished, can be satisfactorily proved.

When in Sutherlandshire in 1850, on the margins of Loch Slam, which subtends or forms a continuation with Loch Loyal, places similar in their general character were pointed out to me, over which the charr were known to congregate in immense numbers. On Loch Leven, in Kinross-shire, also, where this fish (*Salmo alpinus*) is now understood to have become extinct, the spawning-grounds possessed the same conformation.

The sudden disappearance of the charr from Loch Leven has been attributed to the partial drainage, to which, nearly fifty years ago, its waters were subjected—a surface of 4638 acres having been reduced to 3543 acres, and the depth, which previously averaged  $18\frac{1}{2}$  feet, suffering in proportion. By this reduction, the spawning-grounds of the charr must have been seriously curtailed; but I was told, when at Kinross in 1857, that the total disappearance of the fish in question from that quarter had been occasioned by a successful attack made by poachers with the long-net upon the entire stock or body, when in occupancy of the shoal over which their breeding-ground operations were wont to be conducted. There is no doubt, at least, that in common with those of Loch Achilty and Loch Loyal, the spawning resorts of the charr on Loch Leven consisted of a stretch of shallow water, sandy and level at bottom, which gave great facilities for the accomplishment of an act of outrage on the wholesale scale, such as I was informed, on excellent authority, had been committed. The preference shown by the Windermere charr to a rocky bottom is, in face of those facts, not easily explained. I suspect, however, there has been a standing, or traditional assumption, not actual proof or determination, upon that point. In this suspicion I find I am borne out largely by Dr. Davy, F.R.S., brother of the late Sir Humphry, in *The Angler and his Friend*, an interesting volume published eight or nine years ago. Residing, as Dr. Davy has done, at Ambleside, for a long period, during which subjects of natural history, and

in particular that of our fresh-water fishes, have engaged his minute attention, he is entitled to be looked up to as a high authority, even when he differs, which is not often, from Yarrell.

‘From the information,’ he says, ‘I have been able to collect, and I have made it a special subject of inquiry, the charr, in most instances, does not leave its lake for the purpose of spawning. Remember, it is not a river fish, and as a lake fish it is one of great delicacy. The only instances that have come to my knowledge of its choosing the river in preference are two, and these, I think, can hardly be called exceptions; one is in the instance of the charr of Windermere, some of which, not the majority, run up a little way into the Brathay, and deposit their spawn on its weedy, rocky bed, in its widest part, where it expands so as to form almost a little lake. The other is in the instance of the charr of Ennerdale, which leave the lake in the spawning season, and crowd into a pool, the wider part of the stream, a feeder of the lake, and near its entrance into the lake, called “the charr-dubb.”’ Again, referring to the observations of a set watcher, one in whom he held confidence, he states that their spawning month is September, and that they spawn on shoals in the lake. The opinion of Mr. Yarrell in regard to the Windermere or northern charr, viz., that the kinds locally recognised under the terms gilt and silver charr belong to one and the same species, is adhered to by Dr. Davy, but he thinks it doubtful in the case of the Torgoch or Welsh charr, the *Salvelinus* of Donovan, found in the Llyn Cawellyn, and formerly in Llanberis Lake, that the slight difference which occurs in the form of its gill-covers and size and number of its teeth, entitles it to be classed as a distinct species. He considers it, in fact, only a variety of the *Alpinus* or *Salmo umbla* of Continental ichthyologists.

The charr of Windermere are usually taken with the net, occasionally by trolling with the minnow, and very rarely with the artificial fly. Their unwillingness to come to the surface is

owing to their being lavishly supplied with bottom-food of a minute description, and of a rich nutritive quality, similar to what the vendace of Lochmaben subsist on. In Hawes Water, however, near Bampton, they are said to take the fly freely, and do not seem particular as to colour, the ordinary trout-flies of the district answering the purpose. This is the case also in the smaller Highland lakes, Loch Achilty in Ross-shire, and Loch Lee in Forfarshire. In the former I have basketed as many as a dozen and a half in a forenoon, along with some dozens of trout. The flies which seemed to take their fancy most were the yellow professor and a light-brown hackle. The charr approach the lure slowly and cautiously, not like trout,—still, an individual once raised, having missed his aim, will usually make a second attempt to seize the hook on its being repassed over the spot.

On Loch Stack in Sutherlandshire, in 1850, I captured, while fishing from the boat, not far from the centre of the loch, the wind blowing strong, one of these fish. The fly was a small grilse, one of bright Irish pattern. Its capture was looked upon as an-unusual circumstance. The neighbouring district, however, that of Assynt, abounds in small lakes, where the charr are disposed to favour the angler. Loch Fewn is noted among these. The heights of Kildonan, also, where the Helmsdale has its sources, are interspersed with natural reservoirs, in which the charr forms a subject of sport. In Perthshire, many of the larger lakes are known to contain this fish; Lochs Tay, Earn, and Voil among the rest; but, as in Windermere, they are not readily tempted to the surface, nor, where there is a great expanse of water, can the net be brought to bear against them, except during the spawning season, on their resort to the shallows.

Depth of water, and a low temperature in combination with it, appear to be essential to their existence, and from what I have observed subaqueous springs are also in their favour. As a delicacy the charr has not hitherto been held in such high esti-

mation as to have become a subject of demand in the home market. No attempt that I am aware of has ever been made to give it a place on the stall of the fishmonger, or bring it in a potted state into competition with the scanty and often counterfeited produce of the Lake district. The lochs which contain these fish are numerous, but they are located, almost all of them, in the heart of the moor or the deer-forest, and there has as yet been shown little desire, on the part of their owners, to convert them from their sporting uses, and make profit of their contents. In respect to lochs which actually yield sport, this unwillingness to change their character is highly commendable, but there are many large stretches of water in the Scottish Highlands which will admit of being termed superfluous, lying idle from year to year, unvisited by the angler. Not a few of these, which teem with charr and trout of the finest quality, might be turned to account, and made to supply, lawfully and sufficiently, a gap in our market produce, which at present is being precariously filled up by, and gives encouragement to, the exertions of poachers.

I have associated these remarks on our Scottish charr with the Lake district of England, as the repute attached to the *Salmo alpinus* is bound up with that portion of our island, and it was but natural to link to it the acquaintance I have formed with this beautiful fish in a latitude slightly more northern. The standard size, I may notice, ascribed by Mr. Yarrell to the charr, although correct as applied to the produce of Windermere itself, has, I think, been a little overrated. From eight to ten inches may be held as the average length of this fish in Scotland, and such specimens as that possessed by the late laborious ichthyologist, measuring eighteen inches in length, are, as far as I can ascertain, very rarely to be met with. An individual two feet long, the size which it is said occasionally to attain, taken from any of our charr lakes, would form a most valuable curiosity in a first-class collection of our British fishes.

## THE OTTER.

## I.

A JOLLY life the otter leads  
That lurks by Eden Water ;  
He has nothing to do but frisk about  
And take his pick of the eels and trout  
That revel at dusk among the weeds,—  
The dainty old thief of an otter !

## II.

Below the mill at Stichel Linn,  
I met the miller's daughter ;  
Her cheek it was pallid with affright ;  
But when she told me of a sprite  
With rounding eye and demon grin,  
I recognised the otter.

## III.

Now hie thee home, my timid girl,  
And dream away thy flutter !  
We'll up betimes the morrow's morn,  
Before the throstle heads the thorn,  
Or from its nest the joking squirrel  
Plays bo-peep with the otter.

## IV.

We'll up betimes at break of day,  
With hounds well versed in slaughter,—  
As fleet and musical a pack  
As ever cross'd the valley's track,  
And splash'd and dash'd, from bank to brae,  
A-hunting of the otter.

## v.

Old Druid, he's the boy to find,  
And as the scent grows hotter,  
With chiming tongue and steaming pace  
Keep up the spirit of the chase ;  
No abler header of the wind  
Ere grappled with Sir Otter !

## vi.

Young Spurgy to old Druid's bell  
Responds with swatter, swotter ;  
Shaking his jowls in grim delight,  
And sniffing up with all his might,  
Among the perfumes of the dell,  
The fragrance of the otter.

## vii.

We 'll bring to bear the Grip and Gurl  
Against the crafty plotter ;  
The 'wee bit birkies,' Flam and Flor,  
Will no' be hindmost in the splore,  
And snarling Bob, the mongrel churl,  
His teeth show to the otter.

## viii.

Oh ! little recks the oily thief  
That harries a' our waters,  
Of what may be his morrow's fare,  
Who goes a-prowling, here or there,  
And how may come to sudden grief  
The jolliest of otters !



## ROSS-SHIRE AND ITS ZOOLOGY.

THERE is perhaps no county in Great Britain so amply stocked with subjects of interest to the zoologist as Ross-shire. Its harbours, either permanently or as visitors, almost all the native animals, winged or four-footed, which are sought after by the sportsman and naturalist. Possessed, as well as Sutherland, of lofty mountains, numerous lakes and rivers, furnished also, in its connexion with Cromarty and the Island of Lewis, with an extensive coast-line having relations both with the North Sea and the Atlantic, it has the advantage over the contiguous shire, in respect to wood and vegetation, elements which contribute largely to the maintenance and protection, as well as increase of animal life. The variety in the feathered tribe embraced within the compass of Contin parish, and the three or four parochial divisions stretching seaward which adjoin it, is quite astonishing. Lists which I have seen make mention of more than 120 different kinds of birds, inland and aquatic, resident and occasional, shot or captured within the range spoken of. Along with the white-tailed and golden eagles (*Falco albicilla* and *F. chrysætos*) there were comprised in these records nine other species belonging to the genus *Falco*, viz., the kite or gleadd (*F. milvus*), the peregrine (*Peregrinus*), the hen harrier (*F. cyaneus*), the merlin (*F. æsalon*), the kestrel (*Tinnunculus*), the sparrow-hawk (*Nisus*). These six are natives, and common to many parts of Scotland. The occasional visitors are the goss-hawk (*Astur palumbarius*), the ger-falcon or Iceland-hawk (*F. Islandicus*), and the honey-buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*). Among the rarer birds in these lists are the cross-bill or shield-apple (*Loxia curvi-rostra*), the rose-coloured ousel (*Turdus roseus*), the ring ousel (*Turdus torquatus*), the chatterer (*ampelis garrulus*), the ash-coloured shrike or great butcher-bird (*Lanius excubitor*), the snow-bunting

(*Emberiza nivalis*), the king-fisher (*Alcedo ispida*), the siskin (*Fringilla spinus*), and the goat-sucker (*Caprimulgus Europæus*).

With the ornithology of this portion of Ross-shire, I link the recollection of coming across a brood of young woodcocks, four in number, one of which, with the assistance of a Newfoundland dog, which had stumbled upon them at the edge of a plantation near Craig Darroch, I secured, not, however, until it had been stripped of a quantity of its plumage, and was so injured in other respects as to warrant me depriving it of life. This happened in the month of July. The bird captured was full-feathered, and in such plump condition that I had no hesitation in performing upon it, when roasted, with knife and fork. On the banks of the Blackwater, I flushed another woodcock a day or two after; and have been led to understand that the circumstance of the *Scolopax rusticola* taking up its summer abode in this and other parts of Ross-shire is not an unusual one.

Among the quadrupeds belonging to the district under notice, may be mentioned the five species of *Mustelidæ* native to Scotland, viz., the otter, the polecat, the marten, the stoat or ermine, and the weasel. From the animal first mentioned the river Conon derives its name; and as to the prevalence of stoats and weasels, there were stories afloat, when I resided in the neighbourhood of Contin, which described them as periodically arranging themselves into packs or gangs, in which state of combination, they now and then had the audacity to attack the 'human form divine.' For such relations there was no doubt some ground. I was incredulous of them for a while, and might have remained so until the present day, had not an incident occurred, five or six years ago, which removed to a certain extent my scepticism on that point. Immediately subtending the railway bridge which crosses Teviot near the village of Roxburgh, a via-

duct constructed of wire and planking has been laid down for the convenience of foot-passengers, and in lieu of a ferry-boat until lately made use of a short way below. This means of transit, which stands at an elevation of about twelve feet above the ordinary level of the river, and is accommodated with a wire railing on both sides, has been discovered to be splendid parade-ground for an adept in salmon-fishing. It superintends, in fact, one of the choicest halting-places in Teviot, which can only be fished, however, under certain conditions of wind and water, and at the risk of falling foul of an underlying rock ; it being necessary that, in order to canvass it properly, the angler should let out, foot by foot, at least fifty yards of line. From the vantage-ground described, I have met more than once with a casualty of this kind, resulting in the loss of tackle to some amount. On many occasions, however, I have been more fortunate, my fly, which is necessarily kept at play several inches below the surface, having been taken sure hold of by large fish.

One autumnal afternoon, while occupying the centre of the foot-bridge in question, I observed what, at first glance, seemed to be a single object coming towards me at full speed along the line of planking. As it drew nearer, however, I recognised it to be a gang of weasels, nine in number, so closely packed together that I could have covered them all with a trout landing-net of the ordinary size. They were evidently in chase of game of some kind, probably a rabbit, which must however have passed at least ten minutes before, for I had been on the bridge fully that length of time. On coming up to me, the whole gang simultaneously turned neck, and halted for a second. Although prompted to set foot upon them, I abstained from doing so, the idea flashing across me that they were not 'to be lippeded to,' and remained motionless. Their curiosity appeased, the vermin resumed their hunting attitude, and crossed the bridge at full

scamper, disappearing from my view in a turnip-field not far off. I have been furnished through this incident with ocular proof of the fact, that weasels occasionally band together, and follow their chase under the direction of the nose.

A singular instance of the fearlessness and ferocity of this little animal I also recollect meeting with. A partridge had fallen winged to a friend's gun, and was on the point of making its escape on its legs into cover, when I laid hand over it opposite the mouth of an old rabbit-hole. Before, however, I could secure it, out glided a weasel, and, fastening upon the bird, dragged it away into the retreat mentioned, leaving only one of the wings visible, by seizing which I disputed possession with him for nearly a minute, nor did he quit hold of his presumed prize until actually pulled along with it out of his den.

## THE GREETING.

### I.

GOOD cheer ! brother angler, say,  
Is the swift salmon abroad to-day ?  
Have you noted the flash of his glittering mail,  
Or the free wild curl of the Triton tail ?  
Hath he sprung at the winsome fly,  
Smitten by the treacherous feather,  
Heedless of the steel and tether,  
And of human subtlety ?

### II.

Alas ! brother angler, nay !  
Salmon none have I stirr'd to-day.  
Feint, frolic, nor break have I beheld,  
But round me the wily grey trout bell'd ;

One in greed, and one in scorn,  
And a third one, out of pleasure,  
Sprang at my fly. See all the treasure  
Taken by me this blessed morn !

## III.

Ply on, brother angler ! hark !  
The wind is rolling across the park ;  
It ruffles the river from bank to bank,  
And shakes the green covert of rushes lank.  
See how it paces round and round,  
Wild of foot—with step unsteady,  
Dancing with the dizzying eddy,  
To a low, uncertain sound.

## IV.

Ply on, brother angler ! deep  
Along the rapids the brave fins sweep,  
And the salmon holdeth his vent'rous track  
O'er ledges of rock, through fissure black.  
Oh, most hath an angler need  
Of sweet patience and of plodding ;  
For the good wand ever nodding,  
Better than cunning, bringeth speed !

## SERPENTS AND GOATS.

THE reptile portion of the animal creation, in the district of Ross-shire under notice, includes the adder, or common viper (*Pelias berus*), and the slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*). With the former, Tor Achilty and the banks of the Blackwater are numerously infested. In the course of my rambles I have frequently fallen in with them ; and on ascending the Tor on a hot day, one

can scarcely avoid doing so. The reptile is usually found occupying, in a coiled state, the centre of some mossy patch or opening in the heather, to the cover of which, on being disturbed, it will, in most instances, quickly retreat. Except when trodden on, there is little danger of the adder acting on the offensive. I recollect once, however, when fishing for salmon on the Blackwater, in the month of February, close to Contin Bridge, coming suddenly upon two large adders basking, not in the coiled state, but at full stretch, on a bare portion of the bank. Instead of betraying apprehension, they simultaneously, with violent sibilations, erected themselves on the ventral portion of their bodies, their necks stretched, and heads thrown forward, in the shape of a kettle-spout. Stepping back, I called the attention of the Coul gamekeeper, by whom I was accompanied, to the presence of these reptiles, and their menacing attitude. He happened to have his gun along with him, and as they were about, after venting forth their spite for several seconds in the manner related, to attempt an escape, a discharge from one of the barrels blew the nearer one to shivers; the other contriving to glide out of sight through a crevice on the bank. The time of the year when this occurrence took place, coupled with the condition of the atmosphere, which was cold and frosty, make it somewhat extraordinary; the supposition among naturalists being, that strong and continuous heat is required to arouse the viper, and serpents in general, from their hibernating and torpid condition to one of conscious activity.

With the ringed snake (*Natrix torquata*), common in the south of England, I was not so fortunate in this quarter as to form an acquaintance. The only places in Scotland where I have come across it are Glen Gyle, at the head of Loch Katrine, and the hill in Selkirkshire skirting St. Mary's Loch, on which the chapel dedicated to 'The Lady of the Lowes' formerly stood. This reptile, I am told, is frequently met with in Dumfriesshire, a

county which also lays unsettled claim to a new and distinct species of the *Colubridæ*—the *Coluber Dumfriensis*. The ringed snake is certainly more of a rarity north of the Tweed than the adder. There is a specimen of it in the Museum at Kelso, which, singular to say, was taken hold of on a market day, on the staircase of the White Swan Inn, by a farmer from the neighbourhood, under the impression that it was the thong of a hunting-whip which had been dropped inadvertently. It being the common belief that all snakes are venomous, his alarm on finding the supposed piece of plaited leather suddenly endowed with life and motion may well be imagined. It did not, however, prevent the capture of the reptile, which was committed, while still alive, to the tender mercies of the custodier of the Museum, and immersed, without further ceremony, in spirits of wine. In accounting for its appearance, the probability is that it had been conveyed in a torpid state to Kelso, inside of a piece of bog-turf, or what is usually in Scotland called a peat or divot, of which material a cart-load, it appears, had been shortly before deposited in one of the cellars belonging to the inn, for the purpose of being used as fuel or kindling.

What I consider to have been the *Lacerta agilis*, or sand-lizard, I have noticed more than once on the north bank of the Conon, immediately below Loch Luichart. The forest remains, which give character to the scenery of this Highland pass, have already received notice (p. 153). A feature omitted to be mentioned, which engages the eye, is the charred appearance of a considerable portion of the surface, and its occupation by ant-hills of enormous size—enormous, at least, in comparison with the general run of these structures in other parts of our island. I do not over-state their dimensions when I speak of them as rising severally to the height of two feet, from a base of as many yards in circumference. The vegetation, in the shape of ferns, heaths, and mosses, which is strewn here and there over the spot, linked

to the peculiar feature above described, gives the impression of its being an inviting field for reptiles; but, although in passing to Loch Luichart I have crossed it frequently under that impression, I could never gain sight of anything more formidable than the harmless sand-eft. This circumstance in itself was not singular, but it was rendered so in my estimation by the fact that I rarely, when the weather was hot, ascended the contiguous hill, Tor Achilty, without disturbing one or more adders, in places seemingly less adapted for their abode; and I was led accordingly to give some credence to a notion long entertained among the peasantry and pastoral population of Scotland, which at length, after encountering a good deal of ridicule, has been accepted and indorsed, subject to some degree of modification, by modern naturalists. In my approach to the falls of the Conon by the picturesque remains of forest glory which I have described, I was invariably confronted by a huge goat, the most formidable and noble-looking specimen of the *Capra hircus* I ever cast eye on. To compare him, in point of size, to a red-deer, would be to indulge in the hyperbolic; but there was that in his appearance and whole deportment which raised him, as an object of admiration, to nearly the same level. Swarthy in colour, with masses of hair hanging shaggily down over his flanks, a beard of patriarchal growth, and horns of enormous length, thrown back in a fine curve, so as almost to touch the shoulder-points, he seemed an impersonation of the rugged and fantastic scenery round about, reminding one of the wild hirsute figures introduced in classical mythology into the orgies of Bacchus, or the Arcadian festivals held in honour of Pan and the Fauns. There was, moreover, a sort of negative history attached to him, for although the goat's life is not reputed a long one, I could meet with no one in the village of Scatwell, among the simple inhabitants of which he was held in terror, who could remember him as a kid; nor had any claim ever been laid to him as a domestic animal. On the



occasion of my first meeting with this tenant of the rocks, he showed every inclination to dispute my advance; but the sight of the fishing-rod, which was set up and ready for action, evidently disconcerted him, and he hung back in his approaches to the distance of nine or ten yards from my person. It was not, however, until I had commenced fishing, that the spirit of impatience which he had shown at the outset appeared to become exchanged for one of curiosity; and although I have spoken of our introduction as an unfriendly one, at least on his part, I am apt to think, judging from his after conduct, that he regarded my future visits to his domain in a better spirit. He certainly appeared, at least, to take great interest in my operations, planting himself, on collected all-fours, on the most convenient prominence within view, and continuing his survey so long as I remained at the river's edge, within bounds of his assumed jurisdiction.

I have introduced this old acquaintance into notice, because I attribute to him the credit of thinning out the viperous population, which, there was every reason to apprehend, would be even more numerous on his particular beat than on the adjoining ground. The notion I have alluded to, as current among shepherds, is that the goat is an avowed enemy to serpents, and will lose no opportunity of attacking and devouring them, notwithstanding their venomous nature. This belief is one of great antiquity. It is represented by the figure of a goat holding a snake in his mouth in the zodiacal sign Capricorn, and has been adopted, if I mistake not, as an armorial crest in British heraldry. The pertinacity with which it has been clung to, in our hill districts especially, has no doubt instigated an investigation by naturalists into the subject. Through means of this inquiry, the mortal antipathy of the goat to serpents has been established. Its mode of attacking and depriving them of life has also been ascertained; but proof that it actually devours them is still wanting. In

assailing the reptile tribe, the wattled quadruped makes use of its forefeet, raising itself up on its hinder ones, and with great force, rapidity, and accuracy of aim, bringing the others to bear on the object of its dislike. This form of attack, should the snake not immediately succumb, is repeated without delay; in fact, a succession of blows is usually administered before the dealer of them appears to become satisfied. Such are the latest received accounts of the wars of the goats against the serpents.

## FISHER ROB.

### I.

FISHER ROBBIE's deid an' gane ;  
 Death amang his cairns has gripp'd him ;  
 Aft afore, when he wad fain  
 Ha'e made the kittle chiel his ain,  
 Robbie gied a flaff an' slipt him.

### II.

Noo at length the mools amang,  
 The elrich carle has laid him fairly ;  
 Quoth he, ' Ye 've play'd yer pliskies lang,  
 My faith ! but ye maun end yer sang,  
 An' pack awa to saxton Charlie.'

### III.

Wae's me ! sin' canny Rob's awa,  
 I feel sae lanesome an' sae weary ;  
 Tho' simmer winds abune me blaw,  
 Ilk burnie seems a rin o' snaw,  
 An' Tweed gangs daundrin', douf and dreary.

## IV.

Aft I clim' the bosky brae,  
Aft I seek the haly rowan,  
At the gloamin o' the day,  
Ere the starns assume their sway,  
An' the lav'rock woos the gowan.

## V.

Aft I wanner to the stane—  
The warlock stane whaur late we pairted ;  
Wae's me ! sin' fisher Robbie's gane,  
My soople wan' I wald alane,  
Wi' feckless arm, ower pools deserted.

## VI.

Here the hazel boughs aboon  
That to their mirror beck sae gaily,  
Auld Rob upon an April noon  
Gied his last fish its deidly stoon',  
An' as it wammell'd, gaff'd it brawly.

## VII.

There, in yonner stream sae blate  
Quoth he, ' Whane'er the cock's a-crawin',  
Anither cast we'll aiblins get ;'  
But death was tirlin' at his yett  
An hour or twa afore the dawin'.

## VIII.

In the kirkyard beild sae green,  
Puir Robbie's laid by saxton Charlie ;  
An' aye on ilka simmer's e'en,  
I think upon the time that's been,  
An' as I wanner, miss him sairly.

## THE WATER-OUSEL.

AMONG the enemies of the salmon has been classed the water-ousel (*Cinclus aquaticus*). The fact that this joyous bird, one of the few among the feathered race which welcomes with a carol the Christmas-tide, is addicted to the picking up of salmon spawn, has been made patent to me by observation. What other object can it have in frequenting the shallows of our salmon rivers during the pairing season, after these have been denuded by frosty influences and the Martinmas floods of all other kinds of sustenance, and by indulging in cold-bath exercises and subaqueous peregrinations vying with those of the Oriental pearl-diver? None! this is plain. But that the water-ousel does mischief is quite another question. All that it does is to claim a share, along with the common trout, of the wastage of the spawning-beds, in other words, of those beads or particles of *ova* which, not having been buried in the *redd*, are, to all intents and purposes, lost to the river. With this much vituperated hibernal songster no true angler and lover of river-side amenities will interfere. The water-ousel is not only a partaker in the superabundance of our streams, but a large contributor to their pleasures.

## GLEE.

## I.

SEEK ye whaur the burnie travels,  
 Sullied wi' the simmer showers;  
 Whaur the fairies haud their revels,  
 In the cleuch amang the flowers—  
 Seek ye there, free o' care,  
 To dip the flowin' line  
 Wi' cunnin' han', to ply the wan',  
 An' lead the flowin' line?

## II.

Or mayhap, whaur, glen desertin'  
Winds the river, blue an' braid ;  
Noo some quiet meadow skirtin',  
Rinnin' noo below the shade.  
Seek ye there, etc.

## III.

Or amang the hills uncheery,  
Whaur the mirk-mere slunibers lorn,  
An' his dirges wild and dreary  
Pipes the grey whaup to the morn.  
Seek ye there, etc.

## THE WASTAGE ON THE SPAWNING-BEDS OF THE SALMON.

I AM naturally led, in talking of the water-ousel, to say something about the wastage which occurs, to an extent that can hardly be credited, on the natural spawning-grounds of the salmon. When I affirm that not above one-sixth part of the *ova* is properly deposited, or so placed at the desirable depth in the bed of the river as to have the chance of eventually becoming hatched, I do not overrate matters. Observations made by me at the spawning season, from well-reputed points of outlook, for nearly thirty years, have led to this conclusion. Five-sixths at the least of salmon *ova* go directly to waste ; nor, in respect to the remaining sixth, is the chapter of accidents it becomes subject to unworthy of notice. The droughts in connexion with the drainage of our valleys, leaving dry at the hatching season portions of the river's channel where spawning operations had been carried on, the poisons resulting from manufactories and the sewage of towns, made now-a-days fatally active on the occasion

of a summer flood, the attacks of insects, the grub of the stone-fly for instance, which is known to penetrate into the *redd*, and make free with its contents,—these are only a few of the casualties to which this remaining portion of the deposit is exposed (*Vide* Mr. Russel on the Salmon, p. 224). Their effect, however, is greatly to impair the crop which might be expected to spring from *ova* which have been covered up in the natural way, by the fish themselves. Instead of one-sixth, in fact, of the entire deposit shed over the spawning-beds, I feel justified in asserting that not above one-seventh actually comes to life. Of this seventh (which, on an average, may be regarded as the annual produce of a salmon river placed in the circumstances of Tweed), and the disasters it also is exposed to, I shall speak presently; but it is to the primary wastage incurred during the exudation of the *ova* that I would first of all draw attention. Can this wastage to any extent be remedied, and how? These are questions I would certainly press upon the attention of the Commissioners, special as well as general, of our salmon rivers. The experiments of Mr. Shaw and Mr. Young, which paved the way for those carried on on a larger scale at Stormontfield, go to prove that artificial breeding, as it is called, properly conducted, will carry the day over natural breeding to an extent which is really astonishing. A saving, it has been shown, is effected by it, even under drawbacks, of five or six hundred per cent. Judging from the limited scale, however, on which it has hitherto been carried on at Stormontfield or elsewhere, there can be no possible ground for congratulation on the score that the wealth of this or that river, has, through means of it, been materially added to. But the fact of the saving has been established; and the question has occurred to me over and over again, may a plan not be devised, say through a further combination of the natural with the semi-artificial breeding, to work out the principle of this desired economy? That the Tweed, of all rivers, invites to

such an experiment, and presents facilities for carrying it on, I have been long under the impression ; and in a provincial paper, several years ago, gave ventilation to my views. After having drawn a comparison betwixt the parr-stock of Tay and our Border stream, in which I gave credit to the first-mentioned river for its better provision in that respect, a provision springing up from the natural bed itself, which quite throws into insignificance the results of the Stormontfield breeding-boxes, I go on to notice the unusual deficiency which in that year (1854) occurred in the parr-stock of Tweed. From this deficiency I took occasion to predict a failure in the grilse crop of 1855. These are my words : ‘ The parr being at length recognised as the young of the salmon, and connecting with this fact the almost unprecedented scarcity of this little fish in Tweed and its tributaries, what are we to expect next July and August but a corresponding deficiency in the grilse crop ? ’ In this prediction I was correct. The take of grilses in 1855 was up to that date the lowest on record. It amounted to 13,952, or little more than a third of the average of the grilse crop in Tweed during the preceding half century. After venturing upon this prediction, I proceed as follows : ‘ To obviate this is impossible, but I think any further injury likely to result from a failure in the parr-stock of Tweed may be provided against by an expedient in salmon breeding, which, as far as I know, has not yet been proposed, certainly not resorted to. It is to this plan of propagation that I call attention, as one deriving some portion of its feasibility from the views regarding breeding, natural and artificial, which I have already expressed. Indeed, were I to adopt the notions of some writers in respect to the loss of *ova* sustained on the natural *redd* during spawning operations, my project would only appear the more feasible, and the chances of success attendant upon its adoption become greatly augmented.’ This was written in 1854, three years before the passing of the Tweed Act now in force, along, I may add, with

the Amendment Act of 1859. What follows, in order to suit the circumstances under which the river now opens, and the bearings of the Acts in question upon the taking of foul fish, I have slightly altered. The opening of Tweed on the 1st of February, is usually accompanied at the various netting stations by considerable captures, not of kelts only, but also of ripe baggits and kippers, or salmon on the eve of spawning. I have known, under the old Act, when the river opened a fortnight later, to the amount of eighty she-fish, all large and primed with *ova*, having been taken in a single day from a limited portion of Tweed on one of these occasions; and I have every reason to believe, judging from the backwardness of the fish, and the irregularities which occur in their spawning, that the termination of future fence-times will be followed up by similar captures. Now, what I propose is this, that the Tweed Commissioners, or parties having an interest in the salmon-fishings of the river, should instruct competent persons to attend the various netting stations at the opening of the season, for the purpose of expressing, collecting, and inoculating, when opportunity offers, this great annual wastage of spawn, for the purpose also (not of stowing it away in wooden boxes, over which an artificial run of water shall be directed, but) of committing it to 'redds' formed with the shovel, hoe, or plough, in the bed of the river itself, there to await, as a matter of common certainty, its being brought to life. In Tweed there are at hand fifty fords where such 'redds' might be scooped out side by side, if thought expedient, at a trifling expense, and the roe deposited in them, say, put up in small paper bags, without the loss of even a single pellet. A little below Tillmouth, for instance, also opposite Lees, and at Edenmouth, there are fine gravelly stretches, secure from drought or the effects of large floods, where this experiment might be ventured on; but preferable to these, in my estimation, are certain portions of the river situated betwixt Melrose and Kelso,



such as the Monk's Ford above Dryburgh, the stream betwixt the Caulds at Rutherford and the lower portion of Mertoun Water near Littledean Tower.

My preference for an upper range of the river is founded upon an acquaintance with the instincts of the salmon, through which, in their choice of spawning ground, they are generally directed to a considerable distance from the sea; and seeing that the motives which sway them cannot be traced to any regard for their own personal security, I am led to conclude that such instincts are connected entirely with the security of their spawn or offspring. However, I don't insist upon this as a matter of much consequence; and it is possible enough that the experiment I suggest may, after all, prove as successful in the neighbourhood of Coldstream as in that of St. Boswell's or Innerleithen.

In comparing the advantages which the proposed mode of cultivating the salmon stock of Tweed (and I might add also, that of Annan, Nith, and other rivers) possesses over any system of artificial breeding hitherto attempted, very little need be said. These advantages declare themselves. The experiment, properly conducted, must succeed. It is at once the simplest, the cheapest, and most certain mode of propagating salmon that can possibly be adopted. Immediately on the expiry of close-time the nets and cobbles are set in motion. A few shotts determine, in most cases, the contents of the river near the station where these are made. For every clean salmon taken during the first fortnight in Tweed, there are at least a dozen kelts, and four or five unspawned fish, generally in a very forward or mature state. These are secured, as a matter of course, during the ordinary endeavours made by the fishermen to bring the net into contact with something better. There is no cost or extra labour therefore required in order to obtain the spawn. The attendance of one or two of the ordinary river police at each likely station, during the first three weeks of the season, is all that is needed in order to collect the

*ova*, and conduct the inoculating process. This, after a little practice, any one accustomed to the handling of salmon can accomplish. Say the *redds*, by permission, are formed with shovel or plough at the Monk's Ford, betwixt Old Melrose and Dryburgh, nothing more is necessary than to forward the spawn to St. Boswell's station, and thence conveying it to the ford in question, mix it up with gravel or coarse river sand, and commit it to the *redd*; all of which may be done within two or three hours of its being taken from the fish. Can anything be simpler or less expensive? Well, mark the results. Here is a quantity of *ova*, which never could have a chance of being brought to life (for even, taking it for granted the baggits themselves are returned alive to the river, the disturbance occasioned by the constant plying of the nets across or near the spawning grounds, and the liability such fish incur of being retaken over and over again, make miscarriage almost inevitable), these *ova*, down to a single pellet, are rescued from certain destruction, and buried with extreme care in a choice portion of the river, where no ordinary calamity can possibly overtake them. The result will be that almost all the *ova* so inhumed will come to life; and say that they form the supply from only one hundred baggits, each baggit yielding a trifle beyond 10,000 *ova*, we have at once added to the natural resources of Tweed a hatch or brood consisting of 1,000,000, all brought to life at the expense of a few pounds sterling. Of these fry, nearly one-half, without any additional cost whatsoever, is likely to attain the smolt stage, and, allowing that only a single individual out of the two hundred finds its way back to Tweed in the shape of a grilse, the annual produce of the river undergoes an increase of nearly 5000 available fish. Let Mr. Ramsbottom's system of breeding and rearing at one farthing per smolt match this, if it can.

## SONNET—THE EDEN.

THOMSON ! this quiet stream, the song of thought  
Oft in thy bosom rear'd ; and as I steal  
Along its banks, they to my gaze reveal  
The pictures by thy truthful pencil wrought.  
No rash intruder on the rural spot  
I feel, but in that glowing fervour share,  
Which on their page thy far-famed Seasons bear ;  
Nor honoured less is nature, nor less sought  
Her still retreats, while with my wand I fling  
O'er Eden's pools the well-dissembling fly,  
Creating in the mind's fantastic eye  
Castles of Indolence. The sudden spring  
Of a huge trout assails their air-built walls,  
And to the untrench'd earth each hollow fabric falls.

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THE PARR-STOCK OF TWEED AND ITS  
TREATMENT.

THAT the puny occupant of our salmon rivers represents in a juvenile form the royal fish which is so highly prized at table, and affords such exciting sport to the angler, is a well-ascertained fact. Bearing in mind, however, that less than thirty years ago, the opinion even of experienced fishermen was in direct contradiction to this view, and was backed by that of more than one naturalist, we are not surprised that there are still amongst us, and frequenting our river-sides, those who refuse to accept it. Were we to judge, indeed, from the treatment which in its parr state the salmon receives at the hands of the anglers on Tweed-

side, either the body of sceptics must still be very numerous, or there is an error somewhere, which leads to the continuance of a practice quite indefensible, and telling severely, year after year, on the produce of the river. I allude, of course, to the enormous slaughter of infant salmon, under the designation of parr or 'gairats,' which is carried on with the rod during the months of July, August, September, and October, on Tweed and its tributaries. That the actors in this protracted carnage, are, in many instances, certainly not in all, thoughtless urchins, does not excuse the evil; neither does it hold good as a reason for non-interference. In the altered condition of Tweed and its feeders, in the greater facilities given from all quarters to visit them, in the vastly increased and increasing numbers of anglers who frequent their banks, arguments of far greater weight are to be found for instituting, without delay, a rigid protection of the parr-stock. The introduction of a fence season for smolts, extending simply, by the Amendment Act of 1859, to two months (and these, be it noted, forming the *élite* of the trouting season), is to all intents and purposes an ignoring of the parr as the young of the salmon. The salmon fry are virtually recognised by it as in occupancy of the river only during the limited period above stated; and no regard has been paid to the fact, now proved beyond a doubt, that in the shape of a parr-stock, they are there the whole year through, and as such, during the autumnal months especially, are liable to be thinned down by rod-fishers, to an extent which can scarcely be credited.

In a calculation made on allowed premisses, upwards of a million of young fry, irrespective of those slain during the smolt season, are sacrificed annually in this way, and in the name of sport. A similar conclusion has been arrived at by two of the Tweed Commissioners, whom I met last year, on the occasion of one of the experimental markings sanctioned by the Act, after the expiry of the netting season, and they quite concurred with me as

to the necessity of having an early check placed upon this abuse, already too long indulged in. The taking of salmon fry, whether in the parr or smolt state, has been made the subject of a high penalty, both by the General and by the Solway Salmon Fisheries Acts; and why a similar provision has not been introduced for the security of the infant fish in Tweed and its tributaries, can only be explained by the circumstance that, at the time of the passing of the Tweed bill in 1857, the theory that the parr is the young of the salmon, and as such is entitled to be equally cared for with the smolts, was not generally accepted. For the omission in question we cannot account otherwise. Some excuse, it is true, may be claimed for it in the unwillingness of the promoters of the bill to interfere with or hamper the sport of the trout-fisher; but the strength of this claim for generosity gives way when we consider that April and May, the two best fly-fishing months in the year, have been selected (and under the extinguished creed, very properly so) as the season of operation for the smolt clause. And now that the recognition of the parr as a young salmon has become general away from Tweedside, and is gradually establishing itself among the sceptical even here; seeing moreover, that it is expedient some means should, without delay, be adopted for the protection of the young fry at that stage, I pass directly to the question, From what quarter are objections to be looked for, in event of a measure so very desirable being mooted? I am well assured of this, that they will not come from the genuine angler; indeed, I have such firm reliance on the sagacity and spirit of fairness which characterize the fishing community on Tweedside in general, as to expect from that quarter a strong helping hand towards the promotion of this object, made so imperative under the present circumstances of the river. In the taking of parr with the trouting-rod there can be little or no excitement, and those who go about it systematically, do so, not for sport, but as pot-hunters, in ignorance, in some

instances, of the mischief they are doing; in others, I fear, fully sensible of it. The good spirit, however, I am happy to observe, prevails in all the fishing clubs and associations—and these are now pretty numerous—established of late years on the banks of our Border rivers; for, as far as I can ascertain, they have unanimously set face against the taking of parrs, and small fry of every description. I feel at liberty to conclude, therefore, that the introduction of a clause into the General Fishery Act, making applicable to Tweed that portion of the Statute in question, which provides for the protection of the salmon fry in our northern rivers, so far from being objected to, by parties worth considering, will be hailed by them with great satisfaction. For my own part, I am quite satisfied it is high time that something should be done in the way of putting a stop to a practice, at once so unsportsmanlike, and so injurious to the salmon-fishings of Tweed and its tributaries.

I have expressed decidedly, but not a whit too strongly, my views upon the treatment which the parr-stock of Tweed is receiving at the hands of a certain class of anglers. The amount of mischief annually inflicted on it from this source I may have underrated—exaggerated it I certainly have not. The disaster named, however, is only one of several to which the fry of our salmon lie exposed, and I have given it a prominent place in the list of casualties, not because it tells more severely than any of the others on the produce of the Tweed, but because it is capable to a much greater extent of being remedied.

From the attacks made upon them by the common river-trout and the kelted *eriox*, or bull-trout, it is that the salmon fry in reality suffer most; indeed, it is quite impossible to arrive at a just estimate of the damage done by these marauders. That it is enormous can be proved by the fact, made palpable to our senses over and over again, that at a certain season of the year

the great bulk of our river-trout, which have attained the weight of half a pound and upwards, leave off surface and bottom feeding, and take to the coursing down of the salmon fry. These depredations on the parr-stock commence at the hatching season, which, in Tweed, follows close upon the departure of the smolts, and continue until the end of October. In the case of the bull-trout kelts, the havoc in question is at its height in April and May, and is carried on against the smolts themselves when in the act of pushing seaward.

As an example of the voracity of the common river-trout, and the mischief done by it to the parr-stock of the river, I may mention that, not long ago, I abstracted from the stomach of an individual which weighed in the gross only twelve ounces, no fewer than seven infant salmon, all of which, taking into account the strong digestive powers of the *fario*, it is allowable to conjecture had been chased down and swallowed on the morning of its capture, and represented a single ordinary meal.

From that well-known point of observation, Kelso bridge, I have had countless opportunities of witnessing the ravages committed by large river-trout and the kelted *eriores* upon the salmon fry, and of drawing a conclusion, from what has come under my notice there, as to the vast amount of damage, which, year after year, accrues to the parr-stock of Tweed and its leading tributaries, Teviot, Ettrick, Till, and Whitadder. The years 1864 and 1865, owing to the droughts which prevailed during the summer and autumnal portions of them, particularly favoured these observations. The arches of the bridge above mentioned extend across the neck, or rather the stretch of gravel which leads to it, of the Maxwheel Pool—a fine salmon hold, on which his Grace the Duke of Roxburghe several years ago accomplished a feat which, among the many remarkable successes met with by that nobleman, stands pre-eminent. The only wind which strikes this pool with proper effect is that from the north-east, and

under this advantage it was, that his Grace, in the month of August, at a time when the fish are usually in fine condition, hooked, played, and landed twenty-eight salmon and grilises out of twenty-nine offers,—a singular, and, I believe, an unprecedented achievement.

The gravelly shallows which superintend Maxwheel Pool, and lie in contact with the arches of Kelso bridge, are chosen by the large trout as their summer hunting-grounds. During the winter and early spring months, they are made use of by the spawning salmon, and form what may be called a favourite portion of the nursery-grounds of the river. As such, they are without doubt remarkably fertile, and teem at all times with salmon fry. The havoc committed by the common yellow-trout, even within this limited range, upon these defenceless little fish, is, as I have said, very great, and extends over a considerable portion of the year. It is in the summer nights chiefly that the large prowlers, termed swallow-smolts, press the attack; but their raids are not restricted to the dusky hours. At noon-tide, on the hot sunny days, they straggle up singly, sometimes in pairs, from the depths of the Wheel, which they had retired to after their nocturnal forays, in order to digest their plunder, reappetized, and ready to renew the onslaught. Below the bridge, on these occasions, every large stone is claimed by its accustomed occupant. There was one in particular, before which, in 1864, for the space of three months and upwards, a yellow trout of fully four pounds' weight daily took up its quarters. A smaller fish succeeded it as the tenant in 1865, but the character of the spot had been changed by a winter spate, and the former holder, if still a survivor, had deserted, for one more convenient, its place of outlook.

In watching from Kelso bridge, on a favourable day, the proceedings of these trout, I take, and so do many others, a great interest. Shortly after having taken up their position, they give the observer an inkling of their object. The parrs which have



been thrown off the feed on the gravel stretches higher up by the intrusion of a roving yellow-fin, which has no set hold, and pursues in consequence different tactics from his *confrères*, are driven down, many of them, in the direction of the occupied fortalices; and when the body of fry is in a full state of bewilderment, advantage is taken by the watchful enemy to leave his anchoring ground, and bear down upon them.

Such attacks or sallies frequently assume the more protracted form of a chase, and discover all the characteristics which distinguish greyhound sport. I have often witnessed a course of this description, in which a couple of large trout took part, apparently by common consent. The way in which they conducted matters showed method and a considerable degree of judgment. They cast about the shallow ford in parallel lines, not far from each other, as if beating cover, or rather walking up game, and having started their quarry, gave chase with rival keenness. The object of pursuit, in all the instances which have come under my notice, seemed at once to comprehend the extent of its danger, and betrayed this intuitive perception of an alliance formed against it, by the dexterous efforts it made to escape. Like poor puss, it appeared to be quite aware that its chances, on being hard pressed, of baffling its pursuers, lay in doubling and short-turning, which manœuvres its inferior length enabled it to execute with astonishing rapidity. When over-shooting the mark, however, the hunting fish seldom lost sight of their original game, but, on recovery, stuck to it with increased eagerness, although constantly crossed on the line of chase by small fry, to all appearance as seductive. A common resource of the fugitive, by means of which I have frequently seen it manage to escape, was to scuttle away to the extreme shallows, of which, lying close to the abutments of the arches of Kelso bridge, there are several. Under these circumstances, its relentless persecutors usually slacken pace, but when close upon the rear of their prey, would

sometimes, in the excitement of the moment, press on, and actually become stranded.

As well as the large freshwater trout, the kelted *eriox*, sometimes the kelted *salar*, takes part in these persecutions of the parr-stock. The pertinacity, I may remark, with which the assailing fish will stick to its object of attack, can be no secret to the practised minnow-fisher, who, in drawing the lure to bank, through a crowd or shoal of minnows, must have observed how the whole attention of the pursuing trout is fixed upon the object of its chase, to the utter disregard of the others, some of which in their fright appear to graze its very jaws.

The ravages committed by the river-trout on the salmon fry, are, in his little publication, *The Natural History of the Salmon*, made the subject of comment by the late Andrew Young of Invershin. 'The river-trout,' he says, 'may, among all others, be considered the salmon's greatest enemy.' After calling attention to the damage inflicted by them on the spawning-beds, he proceeds, 'It is not only during the spawning season that trout are destructive to the salmon, but as soon as the fry are hatched and abroad in the rivers, they actually feed upon them, and continue to do so during the first twelve months of their existence. We once put a dozen of smolts into a pool along with a trout of half a pound weight, and by next day, the gorgon had devoured the whole twelve; and we have not the least doubt but that the trout at large in the river have an equal share daily with the one with which we tried the experiment. It is therefore,' he concludes, 'essentially necessary that these voracious enemies should be destroyed in salmon rivers, or at all events reduced to the fewest possible number; and among the many practical methods of doing so, we would strongly recommend catching them with the net at certain seasons, and carefully nursing and preserving the otter, as an effectual means of destroying the large river-trouts.'

Agreeing with Mr. Young as to the expediency of holding in check the growth and increase of the common trout in salmon rivers, the question occurs, How, in regard to Tweed, is this to be done? As for the otter, and its friendliness towards the salmon, displayed in thinning out the enemies of the parr-stock, that is all moonshine; and in respect to netting river-trout at the end of the spawning season, as Mr. Young proposes, such a device, if carried into execution on the streams of our Borderland, would call forth an indignant protest from the whole of the angling fraternity. It will be said by some, who know nothing of Tweed and its altered condition as a river, 'Surely the trout-fishers themselves, and they are numerous enough in all conscience, keep a sufficient check upon these depredators?' Allowed. They do their best, and as regards the tributaries and upper parts of Tweed, prove highly serviceable, notwithstanding the notions of many of them about the parr, in thinning the large trout. But from Melrose downwards, if not from a much higher point, all the way to Norham, the trout-fisher, during the fly-fishing season, has but rare opportunities now-a-days of doing execution, the river is so seldom in trim, and when so, not in its wider portions to be compassed; the trout, too, numerous beyond all calculation, have become so fastidious and so uncertain, compared with what they were wont to be, in their feeding hours. This is one, among the many evil effects of over-drainage, etc., which are discovering themselves in our Border valley, and threaten, in teeth of the most wholesome salmon legislation that can possibly be adopted, the conversion of our noble river, stage by stage, into a Styx or an Acheron.

In assisting the river-trout and *errioces* eventually to obtain the mastery over the *salares* or true salmon, I cannot help thinking that the application to Tweed of that section of the General Act, which prohibits the use and possession, for fishing purposes, of salmon-roe, will have an effect. In my judgment it was a mistake,

and in calling it so, I am quite prepared for the surprise which this opinion will create among trout-fishers, ignorant of the peculiar position of Tweed in its lower stretches during the autumnal months. That the salmon-roe is, in a certain sense, a poacher's bait, I freely admit. That great injury may be done by the use of it on trouting rivers, at a season when the fish are quite out of condition, there can be no denial. A considerable amount of injury also may be inflicted, and is inflicted, by worm-fishing under similar circumstances. To obviate this, I would recommend the institution of a separate fence-time for river-trout, on streams where their preservation is desirable,—on all streams, indeed, not made use of as spawning ground by the true salmon.

That section in the General Salmon Fisheries Act for Scotland, which interdicts the employment of salmon-roe as a bait, and makes unlawful the possession of it for fishing purposes, owes its origin, I believe, to the report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the condition of our British Salmon Fisheries six or seven years ago. Sir William Jardine, the eminent naturalist, and Mr. Ffennell, in his position as one of the General Commissioners, if I mistake not, took a leading part in this inquiry. The extensive use of salmon-roe as an angling bait was made, I recollect, a subject of investigation before these gentlemen, and although in the course of the inquiry nothing was elicited which could lead to the conviction that, when used seasonably, and under proper restrictions, this lure was one whit more inviting or deadly than a nicely cleansed worm, a large amount of testimony was brought forward to aid in its condemnation as an angling bait in the breeding season. It was not, however, ostensibly at least, for the mere advantage of the trouting community, that this inquiry was set on foot. To recommend to the Legislature the introduction into a Salmon Fisheries Act, of a clause prohibiting the use of salmon-roe, simply because it was offensive as a lure in the eye of a certain school of trout-

fishers, was inconsistent with the duties, if not *ultra vires* of the Commission. Their interference with this bait, the lengthened investigation that took place with respect to it, arose solely from its connexion with the interests of the Salmon Fisheries, and proceeded on the assumption that the *ova*, of which the preparation used by anglers was made up, were derived solely from foul or black fish,—salmon, in fact, on the eve of spawning. It was an article in consequence that could be brought into the market only through the intervention of the salmon poacher. To this assumption, ignorantly formed, we owe, I am inclined to think, Section XII. of the General Act. There can be no doubt that the chief supply of this article in the English market, was, at the date of the inquiry, received from poaching districts in the south of Scotland. Hawick, Peebles, and Galashiels contributed each its *quota* ; but it by no means follows that the salmon-roe forwarded from these quarters was of the best description, or that an inviting preparation can only be procured from the ripe and unwholesome baggits of the close-time. On the contrary, the salmon-roe most serviceable as an angling bait, in the shape of paste, was wont to be prepared from the *ova* of seasonable fish,—such salmon as are usually taken in the months of September and October, the pellets of which are red, and of a rich uniform consistency, devoid of shell, and having no sanguinary matter intermixed with them, whereas the *ova* of the ripe baggits are watery in their appearance, have lost their fine carnelian hue, and are incrustated with a shell or husk which refuses to amalgamate properly with the common salt used in the preparation. In fact, the salmon-roe of the poaching districts taken from fish in the spawning stage, is just as inferior an article of its kind, contrasted with the salmon-roe taken from good marketable fish, captured by net or rod some weeks at least before the expiry of the open season, as is the soft tasteless flesh of the salmon plundered from the breeding grounds in December or January, compared with

the firm well-flavoured diet which the monarch of the tide furnishes us with at the turn of summer. The prevailing error, away from Tweedside, in regard to salmon-roe, requires at least this much of correction ; but I shall not linger upon it further than to express my belief that it is one entertained by the promoters of the General Act themselves, including the Commissioners,—an error they seem to have taken no special pains to become disabused of. The section in question was made part and parcel of the General Act, under the impression, evidently, that the acquisition of salmon-roe, as a marketable commodity in great demand, and which could always be disposed of at a remunerative price, formed the chief inducement for the salmon poacher to carry on his illegal practices. This was the secret, in fact, of the whole evil. Great things, accordingly, were expected from the prohibitory clause in question, in the way of overcoming the indulgence in salmon-poaching, by rendering it unremunerative,—so, at least, we were led to infer from what fell from the mouth-piece of those to whom we owe this measure. In its application to Tweed it was to work wonders, and act as the surest safeguard that could be hit upon to the breeding wealth of that river. Has it done so? Was the motive imputed the leading inducement to salmon-poaching during the spawning season? I don't affect to extenuate the offence of black-fishing in any degree ; far from it ; but I must give to a considerable number of those who indulge in it, the credit of carrying it on as a ploy or sport, sanctioned both by great antiquity, and by the example, not many years ago, of their betters, ay, of the very men who are at length prudently and praiseworthily lending a hand in fortifying our rivers for the protection of their finny inmates. But let the motives of the salmon-poaching portion of the community be what they may, I know I am quite correct when I affirm that the expectations grounded on Section XII. of the General Act, in its application to Tweed, have, at the threshold, been disappointed.

The anticipated miracle has not been wrought. The demon-spirit has not been allayed. Salmon-poaching, its motives having been misconstrued, and the remedy, in shape of protection, insufficiently administered, threatens to maintain, if not to reinforce its position among us.

### SONNET—A REMINISCENCE OF LEISTERING.

A METEOR-bearing barque, before me made  
For Tweed's broad current from a wooded bay,  
And under midnight's cover, on its way  
Cautiously glided. In its moving shade,  
On either side, the oars' infrequent blade  
Dipp'd flagging, like the heron's wing—pursued  
At every stroke by fiery snakes, that played  
Around the vessel's track. A figure stood  
Upon the prow with tall and threatening spear,  
Which suddenly into the stream he smote.  
Methought of Charon and his leaky boat ;  
Of the torch'd Furies, and of Pluto drear,  
Burning the Stygian tide for lamprey vile,  
That from his bride's dimm'd face, Orcus might gain a  
smile.

And now that I have arrived at this stage of the argument, I shall, as briefly as possible, enumerate a few of the evils which, in my estimation, have already begun to result from the application to Tweed, of a section in the General Act, so uncalled for, and so erroneously based.

*Firstly*, Through its application encouragement has been given to the growth and increase of the river-trout in the lower stretches of Tweed, where, in their relation to the salmon

proper, they may be regarded to some extent as vermin, more especially as the altered condition of the river, during the months when they are in season, prevents them being, as formerly, subjects of sport with the rod and line. Previous to this interdiction, on the occasion of a flood in October or November, the ogre-jawed and predatory orders of the *fario* were forced in close to the banks, and gave opportunity to the angler using salmon-roe as a bait to capture them in considerable quantities, and by doing so, greatly diminish the number of enemies, which, on the falling in of the river, would make their way to the spawning-beds of the salmon, there to feast on the newly expelled *ova*, and disturb the operations of the paired fish, not to talk of their aggressions at the hatching time, and throughout the season on the parr-stock.

*Secondly*, This application of Section XII. to Tweed, takes away the salutary check which the use of salmon-roe as a bait always had on the aggressive dispositions of the *eriox*. Every angler resident on Tweedside is acquainted with the habits and propensities of this fish, and of its comparative worthlessness in an edible point of view. He is also aware of the mischief done by it on the salmon-spawning beds, and in its kelted state, among the young fry. When permitted, the capture of the bull-trout with the salmon-roe (and during its ascent on the occasion of an autumnal flood, it will take, with freedom, no other bait), afforded most exciting sport, inferior only to salmon-fishing with the fly or minnow. It secured to one at all acquainted with the habits of the *eriox*, the frequent run of a powerfully formed fish fresh from the sea, the securing of which, so long as it braved the current, was made doubtful by the comparative fineness of the tackle employed.

*Thirdly*, Now that this manner of sport is prohibited, the encouragement to poaching with the net and spear has been greatly increased by the additional supply which the upper waters receive



of bull-trout in a foul state, quite unfit for food, but not on that account less sought after by the 'black-fisher.'

*Fourthly*, The application of this section to Tweed only acts as a deterrent to the conscientious angler, who has a proper respect for the law. Upon such it presses unfairly, narrowing to a certain extent his field of sport; whereas the rod-fisher, who has no such scruples, finds ample opportunities, away from all possibility of detection, to carry on this illegal practice.

*Fifthly*, This application, by multiplying the duties of the river force, has the effect of weakening its efficiency as a protective body over those portions of Tweed and its tributaries where salmon-poaching is actively carried on. A levy is hereby placed, and that merely for the purpose of watching the movements of the trout-fisher, on the time, tact, and energies of the river police, whose proper functions point to another direction, and are expressly set forth in the Acts of 1857 and 1859. By several decisions founded on this application of the section to Tweed, these *employés* have been virtually recognised in the full and becoming discharge of their duties, and as meritorious guardians of the river, in acting the part of liers-in-wait for persons in the open season pursuing the sport of trout-fishing, who have been tempted to make use of salmon-roe, in the hope of securing with it a happening bull-trout or black-tail. The letter of the law, as it at present stands, favours the recognition; but the effect of it is to place this or that water-bailiff in a position to plead exemption from the more onerous, pressing, and hazardous duties of his vocation. It now forms a leaf in his instructions to dodge and detect the salmon-roe fisher, or the captor with rod and line of the buccaneer of our rivers; and to do this effectually it becomes necessary that the strain on his vigilance should be kept in operation during those very hours in which the serious business of the salmon poacher is at a stand-still. With this diurnal claim upon his exertions, what reserve of inclination, not to say pluck

and energy, can be expected from him as a means of securing adequate protection for the salmon during the night watches? The farce of browbeating the angling community in this way is surely no preparation or stimulant for the performance of those more urgent duties which devolve upon the river police. It presents, on the contrary, an easy substitute for the hazards conjoined with the proper administration of salmon protection (an encounter, for instance, with a body of nocturnal poachers), and a pretext at the same time for declining or negligently fulfilling duties involving such risks.

These are some of the evils which the application to Tweed of Section XII. of the General Salmon Fisheries Act is working out, and I name them, not certainly with any expectation that my doing so will have the slightest effect in causing to be restored to anglers on Tweedside the privilege they have recently been deprived of, but simply because they start up and pass before me as shadows of greater disasters threatening the breeding-grounds and parr-stock of a once noble salmon-river.

#### THE FEATHERED ENEMIES OF THE PARR-STOCK.

I HAVE not yet named as enemies to the salmon, the heron (*Ardea cinerea*), and two species of sea-gull, *Larus canus* or common gull, and *Larus marinus* or black-backed gull. In the neighbourhood of Kelso, the herons which frequent Tweed and Teviot are known, I may say, by head-mark. One or more of them may be observed every day close to the town, usually not far from the slap in the cauld-dyke, above the junction of the two rivers, where a kind of island is formed, called the *Ana*. Teviot, among its constant visitors, reckons several fine old specimens of this stately bird. The heron here is never molested, and nobody wishes it harm. Its presence is an auspicious sign, welcomed by every angler. The injury done by it in the way of

picking up a few salmon fry is insignificant. Whether the birds belonging to this locality are attached to any heronry is a question. There are three communities of this kind that I know of in Roxburghshire. That the visitors I speak of, if belonging to any of these, do not regularly wend their way home at dusk, but take up night quarters in the neighbourhood of their daily haunts, I have every reason to think, having observed them, more than once, settle down, three or four together, as if for this purpose, after sunset, on the trees in Floors Park.

## EPIGRAM.

TEVIOT a river is that lives by Rule,  
And scorns all guidance from your sage Ulysses ;  
But takes its ruddy Ale before its Kale,  
And with a merry mouth fair Anna kisses.

The mischief done by the black-backed and common gulls to the parr-stock, at a certain period of the year, is no doubt considerable. Both are greedy birds, but the lesser is the more voracious of the two ; and in consequence of its greater abundance and fearlessness when at feed on our rivers, the more destructive. The ravages, however, committed by the gulls are to some extent compensated, as in the case of the heron, by the delight which every one receives from watching their motions. As well as to the salmon fry, the large black-backed gull is a formidable enemy to the common fresh-water trout. I recollect, two or three years ago, having my attention directed to an individual of this species, which had just made seizure of a trout, to all appearance fully half a pound in weight. Instead of swallowing it, as he would probably have done had his prize been a parr or smolt, without quitting the water, he took wing, holding the fish in his bill, and alighted near the opposite bank in a shallow

part of the river, where there was no perceptible current. There, to my surprise, instead of despatching, he forthwith set free his victim, but it was only for a moment; the trout, on making a quick attempt to gain the deep water, was again pounced upon and transferred to the shallows within a yard of the river's margin, where it was released for a second time. This game of allowing the fish its apparent chance of escape and recovering it, was carried on by the gull for fully ten minutes. At length, however, the trout, probably showing symptoms of exhaustion, and being unable to afford its tormentor further sport, was despatched and swallowed. Besides the gulls above mentioned, a number of aquatic birds, including the *Larus rissa*, or kitty-wake, the *Sterna hirundo*, or sea-swallow, the *Mergus serrata*, or goosander, the mallard, teal, and widgeon, visit Tweed periodically, but I am not aware that they do any great injury to the parr-stock. A curious instance of the fearlessness of the tern or sea-swallow happened to a friend of mine two years ago. He was fishing with a large salmon-fly from the boat at Sprouston Dub, along with one of the Kersses, and was in the act of recovering his hook after a cast, when one of these graceful little air-cleavers pounced upon and lifted it up into the air. The lure, which, happily for the bird, was too large to be swallowed, having dropt from its bill, the tern made a second stoop, and succeeded in seizing hold of and relifting it before it had reached the surface of the water. On the hook becoming again detached, my friend took the opportunity of recasting his line. The bird, however, returned to the charge, and actually, before retiring, made several other attempts to carry off the fly.

Throughout the Border-land, I may mention the feathered tribe seldom meets with molestation except from licensed persons, and even by them game and vermin are made almost the only objects of pursuit. A better feeling certainly prevails among the juveniles of the present day towards birds of all sorts

than that which had its sway over boys forty years ago. Possibly this may be accounted for by the organization since that period of a more vigilant county police; but I recollect when it was the ambition of almost every school-lad to possess either an old musket or horse-pistol, wherewith, on Saturday afternoons and other holidays, along the highways as well as the byways, he might wage war against the winged races, from the hedge-sparrow upwards. In the neighbourhood of Edinburgh this practice, coupled with those of bird-nesting and cat-worrying, were general in my younger days, and received no check in any one shape from the authorities. Around our country towns, too, it prevailed to a great extent, and the small birds in consequence were far from being abundant. A pop even at a thrush or blackbird was considered a rare opportunity, and the falling in with a wood-pigeon the event of a twelvemonth. It is quite changed now, at least in the district where I reside. Bird-nesting is nearly abandoned, bird-shooting, of the kind I have just spoken of, quite. All round Kelso, for miles, is one vast aviary. Thrushes, blackbirds, larks, linnets, ousels, and finches, pour forth their strains of melody three-fourths of the year round. The plaint of the wood-dove, the cawing of the rook, the chattering of the jack-daw, the cry and flaff of the pec-wit, the cheep of the partridge, the whirring of the pheasant, and, by night, the grating crake of the landrail, or the hooting of the owl, are sounds which dwell continually in our ears. Before us, during the summer days, sport unharmed the swift, the house-swallow, and the sand-martin; and in the summer dusks the bat flits forth, selecting the passer-by as a companion in its beat, and performing its eccentric evolutions often within arm's-length of his person. On the banks of our rivers, almost every step we take brings under our notice one or other of these feathered frequenters. The heron, the gull, the wild-duck, the water-hen, the rail, the bell-coot, the tern, the sand-piper, the

ousel, and the wag-tail, are everyday objects of attraction. Occasionally a kingfisher darts before us, scarcely giving time for recognition before it has passed, like a meteor, out of sight. In the covers and coppices, besides the warblers, abound the several varieties of wrens and tom-tits native to Scotland; also the creeper or smaller woodpecker, yellow-bunting, etc. The bird, however, which of late years has been most on the increase, is undoubtedly the starling,—a nest of which, containing eggs or fledglings, was held, not very long ago, as a great acquisition, whereas now-a-days nearly every veteran tree in the vicinity of Kelso is appropriated, during the breeding season, by one or more of these new settlers. Among the rarer birds which have been shot within memory in this quarter, may be mentioned the great northern diver, a specimen of which was killed in 1819 on the Teviot close to Roxburgh Castle; the osprey, or fishing-hawk, shot on the banks of the Tweed, near Makerston, about four years ago; the honey-buzzard, killed at Newton Don in 1864; the tippet-grebe, killed at Maxwheel about eighteen years ago; the stormy petrel, found dead in the manse-garden at Hownam in 1825; the red-throated diver, shot on a pond not far from Coldstream; the cross-bill, male and female, shot near Jedburgh about ten years ago; the great bittern, shot on a pond near the Hirsell, in Berwickshire, in 1837; the Egyptian goose, male and female, shot by his Grace the Duke of Roxburghe in Floors Park in 1857; the hoopoe, killed at Maxwheelheugh in 1859; the Bohemian chatterer, or wax-wing, male and female, shot at Stoneridge, Berwickshire, about ten years ago; the rose-coloured ousel, killed at Lady-Kirk, Berwickshire, about fifteen years ago; the greater spotted woodpecker, killed at Minto; the lesser spotted ditto; the goat-sucker, shot at Springwood Park; the Barnaele goose at a loch near Ruberslaw; a brace of quails at Caverton-Edge.

In accounting for the increase of birds of all sorts, the snipe

excepted, which has taken place within the last quarter of a century, besides the greater efficiency of the county police, may be taken into consideration the immense addition which has been made to the coverts and plantations throughout the district, and the fortifying against acts of trespass the parks and policy-grounds of the large landed proprietors with high walls in lieu of low dykes and hedges, which, besides offering temptations and facilities for intrusion, gave harbour to weasels and other vermin. At the same time, as one of the undoubted causes of this increase, a large amount of credit, I consider, is due to the better feeling towards animals, birds especially, which prevails among the juveniles of the present day.

Mr. Alexander Russel's admirable book of *The Salmon* has made it quite superfluous for me, in these rambling sketches, to do more than enter into some minor points connected with the natural history of this fish which he has not taken up. That there is still left a large field of interesting inquiry in connexion with the *salar* and its congeners there can be no doubt. The parr life, so to call it, of the orange-fin smolt; the singular provision in the shape of ripe milt, with which the male parrs of the salmon proper are furnished in the months of November and December, or at the commencement of the spawning season, no corresponding forwardness of the roe-leaf being exhibited in the female parrs; the numerical superiority of the males of the young salmon when in the parr stage; the mysteries which attend the pairing of salmon, and their 'redding' operations; the object which the spring fish have in view in ascending our rivers; the possible production of mules or crosses among the different species belonging to the genus *Salmo*; the prevalence of the *eriox* in connexion with Tweed and Coquet, and its comparative paucity as a visitor in our northern rivers,—all these, and many others, are subjects open to investigation, and upon which it is desirable additional light should be thrown.

The following lines are intended as a companion sonnet to that on page 213 :—

SONNET. IRREGULAR.

ANOTHER gathering from the days gone by !  
Another re-assembling by the stream  
Of dear old forms—a grand fraternity !  
What noble presences invest my dream !  
Parents of deeds renowning and renown'd—  
The wrestlers that in art and song o'ercame,  
And help'd to raise our country to its fame !  
The muse of memory stands on hallow'd ground,  
And in performance of a solemn rite,  
When to the trysting-place of old regard,  
Which cons the river in its varied flight,  
(A wooded knoll with undergrowth of sward,)  
She summons round her all the shades of worth—  
Companions in the sport which lightens toil—  
The hundred-gifted champions of the North,  
Who with their increment of boisterous health  
Drawn from unstinted use of heaven's pure air,  
Heighten'd the lustre of the midnight oil,  
And gave to life new thoughts and fancies rare—  
Standard accessions to our famed book wealth !

REQUIREMENTS OF TWEED.

IRRESPECTIVE of some alteration in the Tweed Salmon Fisheries Acts, which shall better provide for the safety of the parr-stock belonging to our Border rivers, throughout the year, there are other desiderata in regard to them which cannot be too vigorously pressed upon the attention both of the Tweed Commissioners and



the angling community at large. I shall treat of these desiderata *seriatim*. First of all, as coming under this denomination, I would urge an extension of the annual close-time, which extension shall be made applicable to the whole of Tweed and its tributaries, with the exception, if insisted on, of that portion of the main river over which the tidal influences prevail, namely, from the neighbourhood of Norham downwards. The new Tweed Acts have now been in operation for six or seven years, and a pretty fair opportunity has accordingly been given for judging of their efficiency as remedial measures. On all hands, I think, it must be admitted, that they have worked, on the whole, very satisfactorily, and that under drawbacks not contemplated, and which it was impossible to provide against. Among their beneficial provisions, those which have interdicted the employment of fixed engines in the capture of salmon, and insist upon the restoration to the river of foul and unseasonable fish, hold a leading part. The salutary effects of the last-mentioned provision, in particular, have discovered themselves, both in the preponderance as to numbers, which is being established in favour of the salmon or adult fish over the grilse, and in the increased average size attained by the former.

These good results, however, it appears to me, are capable of being greatly enhanced by the rectification of what the promoters of the bill of 1859 must at length have become convinced was an error of some consequence. I allude to the opening of the Tweed for angling purposes so early as the 1st of February. That even the lower proprietors, who, in order to have the presumed produce of their fisheries placed on an equality with that of our northern rivers, were the most clamant in behalf of an early opening, have gained any advantage from it, is very questionable. Judging from the reports circulated by the press, of captures effected at the various netting stations during the month of February, for some years back, I am led to think that great

difficulty has been experienced in the clearing even of the working expenses. If such has really been the case, and there is taken also into account the damage which must have resulted from operating with the long-net over a large portion of the river at so early a season, only the want of common sense could induce to the continuance of an employment which is at once injurious and unremunerative.

But while the opening of Tweed in February is questionable as regards the interests of the lower proprietors, there can be no doubt of its being a mistake, as far as angling is concerned. Of this mistake, every year promises to lead nearer and nearer to the apprehension. The conviction gains with us that February, and even March, form a valuable portion of the spawning season for salmon on Tweed. In fact, there can be no question about it. Not only do we find the gravelly stretches of the river still occupied by the breeders, but our wars with the kelts are diversified, every now and then, by the capture of an unspawned fish. As to the chances of falling in with a clean salmon during the months above named, I do not exaggerate when I assert that for every one fish of that description taken by the rod-fisher, two hundred of the sort interpreted to come under the designation 'foul and unseasonable,' are hooked, played, and brought to land. Restricting my calculation to that stretch of Tweed, embracing two-thirds of its course, which heads the Makerston casts, and includes the Ettrick and Lyne waters, I would be nearer the mark in affirming that not one fish in a thousand, so treated in February and March, is of the kind in question, viz., a clean, marketable salmon. This being the case, and holding in view the injury which, to some extent, there can be no question, is inflicted on the kelts and baggits by means of the large hooks made use of by the angler early in spring, I think it highly desirable that the opening of Tweed and its tributaries for salmon-fishing with the rod, should be deferred at least six weeks; in

other words, that the annual close-time, as far as rod-fishing is concerned, should be made to extend to the 15th of March, instead of concluding, as at present, on the 31st of January. In venturing this opinion, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is shared by nearly every one who takes an interest in the salmon-fishings of Tweed.

Kelt-fishing, when linked with the chance of falling in, now and then, with a clean salmon, affords no doubt some amusement; but that chance, as the experience of anglers since the passing of the Act of 1859 has shown, is, during February and March, so remote, and the disappointments of those trusting to it are usually so numerous, as to justify us in affirming that the edge of the sport has at length been fairly worn out.

The next desideratum in regard to Tweed, is one which, although it does not properly come within the province of those interested in the salmon-fishings of the river to deal with, has its bearings in a parallel direction. The expediency, or rather urgency, taking into account the altered circumstances of our Border rivers, and the vast accession which railway communication has assisted in making to their frequenters, of instituting a close-time for trout-fishing, is generally admitted. Nor ought there to be the slightest delay, through the intervention of established fishing associations, etc., in bringing this institution to bear. I would propose that the trouting close-time should not only embrace the fence season, which at present rules in regard to salmon-fishing, but that it should extend in spring to the 15th of March, and in the latter part of the year include, on all streams not made use of by the *salar* and *eriox* for spawning purposes, the months of October and November. To apply it to the wider stretches of Tweed during these months, as I have already shown, would be to give countenance to the greatest enemy which the *salar* or true salmon has.

Another requirement, which the present exigencies of the

the river, it appears to me, very strenuously demand, is the application to Tweed and its tributaries of the license system. I took occasion, shortly before the passing of the Amendment Act, to urge, through the medium of a provincial paper, attention to this subject. From the views then expressed by me, I see no reason to withdraw, and shall reiterate them in substance, if not in the exact letter. After referring to the favourable working of the license system in its application to the Irish rivers, I proceed to say that I am quite aware of the difference, in point of position, betwixt the salmon-fishings on these rivers and the salmon-fishings of Tweed and our Scottish streams, a large proportion of the former being still in the hands of the Crown, whereas the latter are looked upon as having been transferred to private hands, and made identical, in a great measure, with private property. The operation of the angling license in Ireland is accordingly assisted by this circumstance. There is the inducement to avail one's-self of it in the fact that it is equivalent to a permission to fish salmon with the rod over the whole range of fishings held in reservation, as *inter regalia*. Were the license system introduced, say in connexion with a General Salmon Fishery Act for Scotland, the licenses granted under it would simply have the effect of qualifying the parties who hold them. They would not invest them with any real or direct interest, for the time being, in the fishings themselves. The Irish license carries with it, as far as the Crown fishings are concerned, the authority of a permit. A Scotch salmon license could only, under the circumstance of there being no Crown reservations, have the effect of a sporting certificate.

This difference in the relative position of the Irish and Scotch salmon-fishings certainly appears unfavourable to the institution of the license system in Scotland, but it would not, I feel sanguine, very materially affect its success. The prevailing rage for rod-fishing, encouraged by the prolongation of the angling

season to the end of November, would be sufficient security for a large and increasing run upon certificates.

In connexion, however, with a General Fishing Act, the license system, introduced as an auxiliary to protective purposes, would require to be peculiarly organized, as regards the distribution of its annual proceeds, in order to benefit Tweed. On the assumption that these proceeds reached £2000, a distribution of them, regulated by the valuation of the salmon-fisheries over the whole body of our Scottish rivers, would give but a slender moiety to the Border stream; whereas, in connexion with a local Act, such as at present obtains, the sale of licenses adapted to Tweed alone would, in all probability, rating the cost of each license at £1, add a sum of £300 to its protective fund.

As a further, but more indirect assistance to salmon protection, the proceeds which would accrue from the introduction of a trout license, bearing a claim as well as a qualification to angle for river-trout on Tweed and its tributaries, are worthy of consideration. By all genuine lovers of the angle, a trout license, based upon this principle, and regulated in the matter of cost so as to accommodate the humblest of the working classes, would be greeted with delight. It would insure fair sport to every one; it would help, on all sides, to set pretensions at rest; it would define the legitimate means of angling, and the legitimate season to angle in; it would disarm at once a large section of the poaching fraternity, by uprooting the motives which draw it together; it would keep in check the lawlessly disposed that remain; in fact, the number of benefits likely to result from its operation, in the way of fortifying the spawning-grounds, and restoring order, sport, and plenty to our Border rivers, is such as make its imposition thoroughly and immediately desirable.

But whilst I foresee, along with the advantages above named,

an indirect means of assisting salmon protection in the introduction of a trouting license, I do not wish to be understood as favouring a combination of the two interests. They stand, when carefully examined, quite independent of each other, and the proper protection of either interest by itself in the hands of its natural guardians would assist to confirm that independence; still there are mutual relations holding betwixt them which ought to be acknowledged, the more particularly when, as in this case, they may be made to work together with mutual advantage. The proceeds of a trouting license, based on popular principles, would, I am of opinion, secure a large amount of protection to our Border streams. Even at the moderate charge of a shilling to the party providing himself with it, the trouting license would draw a considerable revenue, not less, in all probability, than £300. It would embrace among its holders a large proportion of the male population of the counties of Roxburgh, Berwick, Selkirk, Peebles, and Northumberland; it would find also, in these days of quick transit, plenty of supporters from Edinburgh, and other towns at a reasonable distance. As a manifestation of how it would operate from the direction of the Scottish capital, the effect of a summer holiday in crowding the railway trains with clerkly anglers might be instanced, it being notorious, that at the stations situated on Gala-water alone, upwards of forty disciples of Walton have been frequently deposited in the course of a single morning, not one of whom, I venture to say, would grudge the payment of a small sum annually for the purpose of bettering his chance of sport.

In the event, however, of a system of trouting licenses being instituted and followed out, the proceeds arising from this source might be greatly increased by the adoption of a scale of charges, founded on a proper regard to the circumstances and opportunities of the different members of the angling community.

The following scale will serve to illustrate my proposal :—

Cost of License No. 1, entitling the party holding it to angle for river-trout, from 15th March to 1st October, on Tweed and all its tributaries, . . . . .	£0	5	0
Cost of License No. 2, entitling party holding it to angle for river-trout during the period above mentioned on Tweed, or streams connected with it, in the neighbourhood of his residence, say within the circle described by a radius of three miles, .	0	2	6
Cost of License No. 3, entitling to angle one day in the week within the limits above specified, .	0	1	0
No. 4, Visitor's License, per week, . . . . .	0	1	0

*Suggestions as to a License for Salmon-fishing.*

License for salmon-fishing with rod and line, entitling a party duly qualified, as a proprietor or tenant of salmon-fishings, or as the holder of a permis- sion from a proprietor or tenant of salmon-fish- ings, to angle for salmon, . . . . .	1	0	0
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This License, over and above, to entitle the person holding it, and possessing the necessary qualification, to capture with rod and line, as vermin, during October and November, common trout and bull-trout, on or near the spawning-grounds of the *salar*, without any restriction as to bait.

I have used the word 'entitling' in connexion with this Trout-ing License as descriptive of the powers which, in order to secure for its imposition a favourable reception, it would require to convey. As a mere temporary qualification, the trouting license, I fear, would meet with opposition. As embodying, on the other hand, a certain amount of claim, as insuring to the holder more than the equivalent of its cost, it must naturally draw favour and gain common support.

I am aware that some of the proprietors of trout-fishings con-

sider this a question of their own, and that I shall be held presuming when I offer even a suggestion on the matter. To recommend the transference of their claims into the hands of a body of license-holders, would, not very long ago, have been looked upon as a piece of unwarrantable impertinence. I am greatly mistaken, however, if, so far as our Border rivers are concerned, there is not a new light breaking in on the subject; if, in fact, the proprietors of trout-fishings are not beginning to see that it would be for their own interest to shift the custodiership of their waters from the hands of poachers to the more honest and considerate keeping of the angling public. Most certainly they have nothing to dread, and much to hope for, from the organization of a well-ordered trouting license system, which guarantees to the party availing himself of it a certain amount of recreation, in lieu of a fixed sum. Such a system, judiciously carried out, gives to them advantages, in the shape of protection, which more than make amends for their temporary concessions. To those proprietors of Tweedside who possess salmon as well as trout-fishings, the adoption of the trouting-license would, as I have said, be an immense boon. It would not only assist protection by means of its proceeds, but it would help greatly to enfeeble, if not to lay prostrate altogether, the spirit of poaching on Tweedside. On these grounds it is, as a measure both remunerative and reformatory, that I urge its speedy adoption.

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## CONCLUSION.

IN the preceding sketches, the bulk of which relate to my juvenile experiences as a trout-fisher, I have had occasion, in connexion with my trips to St. Mary's Loch, and other fishing excursions, to introduce the names of several of my old com-



panions and fellow-anglers. I did so in the cheering knowledge that the friends I spoke of were still on the sunny side of the hill, strong and active, having the hope before them of lengthened days and increased honours. The anticipation also of again meeting and renewing together our river-side comradeship was blended with this assurance, and made pleasant the penning of these early reminiscences.

Since the task, however, of putting together and arranging for publication this volume, was commenced, the reunion so fondly looked forward to, has been made impossible by the occurrence of events, not less startling than melancholy, which has left me almost the sole survivor of a circle once so animated.

In the recent withdrawal from this earthly scene of Professor Aytoun and Sheriff Gordon, the loss sustained by our northern capital was one of no common order. A poet and an eloquent man, ornaments to a city renowned in art and literature, were summoned, in the hey-day of life, from their exalted places. Personally speaking, I have been deprived by this withdrawal of two old friends, with whom for a term of years it was my wont, the third of a century ago, to stroll rod in hand among our Border valleys, and under the roof of their gifted father-in-law to spend many and many a happy day. Preceded shortly before by the demise of Professor Ferrier of St. Andrews, this double stroke has been felt by me all the heavier.

But the crowning sorrow was still in reserve. Following hard upon these bitter losses, has been the recent removal from a home made dear to me as its annual visitor by many a fond association, of the companion in hundreds of rambles over moor and mountain, by the loch and river-side, of a true, generous-souled friend, endowed with qualities of mind far above the common order, possessed of a fine taste in arts and literature, a sportsman whose keenness was of that kind which showed more delight in the success of another than his own; a naturalist,

trained as such at the foot of Gamaliel, who entered with spirit into the study of zoology, and was well versed in all its branches ; one, I shall only add, who, irrespective of any regard entertained for him as the eldest son of Christopher North, was valued, loved, and idolized by all who really knew him ; for a more unselfish nature never breathed, and a nobler, yet gentler heart never throbbed.

Under this series of afflictions I have prepared, with a troubled heart, these trifles for the press, one of the motives for their publication being the recognition of them as a souvenir of the ' Auld Lang Syne ' by the sharers with me in the sports of my youth.

## THE ANGLER'S GRAVE.

### I.

SORROW, sorrow, bring it green !  
True tears make the grass to grow,  
And the grief of a friend, I ween,  
Is grateful to him that sleeps below.  
Strew sweet flowers, free of blight—  
Blossoms gather'd in the dew ;  
Should they wither before night,  
Flowers and blossoms bring anew.

### II.

Sorrow, sorrow, speed away  
To our angler's quiet mound ;  
With the old pilgrim twilight grey  
Enter thou on the holy ground.  
There he sleeps whose heart was twined  
With wild stream and wandering burn,  
Wooper of the western wind !  
Watcher of the April morn !

## III.

Sorrow at the poor man's hearth !  
Sorrow in the hall of pride !  
Honour waits at the grave of worth,  
And high and low stand side by side.  
Brother angler ! slumber on,  
Haply thou shalt wave the wand,  
When the tide of Time is gone,  
In some far and happier land.



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I.

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